

FAMILY LABOR

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the division of labor between males and females is regarded as corresponding to the natural propensities of the two sexes. That a man should concern himself with a woman's work, such as the sale of eggs or the making of butter, is the subject of derisive laughter, while a woman's smaller hands make it "natural" for her to be a better hand at milking the cows.

Even when the communal labor of the family is demanded and women take their place in bog, garden, and meadow, a definite role is assigned them. Usually it is the lighter tasks which are known as women's work. There is no formal taboo confining a woman to women's work. Heavy work is merely felt to be a hardship upon her. At the potato planting the women do the arduous work of planting the sprouts which they have prepared, bending over to put them into the ridges prepared by the men. They do their share, if necessary, of cultivating, but they are not generally accustomed to the spade, which like the plough, the harrow, the mower, scythe, and turf "slan" is regarded as a masculine implement. At the potato lifting they go along behind the man who turns the potatoes out of the ridge with spade and plough, and pick them up. At the haymaking, the pitching, raking, and some of the building of the haycocks are left to them. But the mowing, especially where it involves the horse-drawn mowing machine, and the building of the rick in the haggard, are masculine skills. In all cases of field work of this sort the role of the woman is usually auxiliary. The same holds in turf cutting. The men do the actual cutting in the bog trenches, while the women knead the peat into briquets and pile it for drying.

The many attitudes and beliefs which surround this type of division of labor illustrate again the socially determined character of the distinctions and their genesis in the intersexual relationship. Just as the man's work is the harder, the more various, and the wider in scope, so the attitudes express a greater valuation of the men's work within the

58 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

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[578] tionship militates against the growth of close mutual sympathy. As a result, the antagonisms inherent in such a situation often break through very strongly when conflicts arise.

The division of labor in the masculine sphere between father and sons, then, is more than an arrangement in farm management. It is very directly part of the systems of controls, duties, and sentiments which make up the whole family life. The apprenticeship and the long subordination of the sons in farm work are reflections of the entirety of their relationship to parents; it is impossible to treat the two spheres of behavior separately.

Similarly, the relationships in farm work between the other members of the household cannot be treated separately.

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● 562 On the other hand, the relationship of mother and son has a very different content. Like that between father and son, it is the product of years of development. It is marked, too, by a similar retention of subordinate status on the part of the son. In farm work the boy is subject to commands of his mother even when, fully adult, he has passed over exclusively to men's work. It is for this reason that many Irish farm widows with grown sons can successfully manage a farm for many years before they ultimately make it over upon a son's marriage, and from their restricted scope within the household and haggard effectively direct operations in the masculine sphere. In such cases, the woman retains control. Even in such an important matter as her son's eventual marriage she has a very dominant voice.

593 But within the scope of such a subordination there is a quite different affective history. The relationship is the first and earliest into which a child enters. It is very close, intimate, and all-embracing for the first years of life; only gradually does the experience of the child expand to include brothers, sisters, and, last, the older male members of the household.

68 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

593 tionship of their parents. Thus there is a good deal of the boy's regard for his mother in his attitude toward his sister. Likewise for the sister, especially in the years when both are fully adult, the brother comes to have much of the position of the father, especially if he is older. He shares the masculine ultimate control of farm and household. If she remains on the farm after her brother's marriage, she must look to him for her dowry.

The country people have a good deal to say about the strength of this bond. Deep-rooted in the years of common subordination and common association, it survives the removal of the sister to another house and farm. It means much visiting and a close relationship with the coming children. The country people marvel that a young child may often like its mother's brother better than its "own uncles." They mean thereby that the bond survives in equal strength with that where the common patrilineal interests of a common family name are in question, as in the case of two brothers and their children.

589 That the complete family is the complete unit of life both
592 social and economic to the small farmer is admirably illustrated by the incomplete families of the countryside. By the term "incomplete" the authors indicate those many small farms which are worked by spinsters, bachelors, widowers, and widows.

589 In such farms, control is exercised by the person owning
592 the farm. A widow is usually helped out by a male relative, brother, nephew, or son. Here again the male devotes
● 562 himself to the tasks which in ordinary circumstances would fall to the father in a full family unit. The control over expenditure and the disposal of farm goods rests, however, with the woman. But even then the bargaining in such typically masculine enterprises as the cattle fair would be delegated by her to her helping relative. In one instance which came to the authors' notice a young widow called

THE RELATIONS OF KINDRED

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her unmarried brother to live with her and directed his efforts in draining a large field. The two of them ran the farm very successfully, though the brother grumbled. In another, a "landless" young man pleaded successfully to a Land Commission official for an addition to his aunt's holding, presented his case, and carried out the negotiations, but the final reference had to be made, of course, to the aunt for whom he worked, for in such case the feeling that the man must represent the family and farm unit in the community at large is sufficiently strong to push a subordinate "boy" into the position usually filled by the farm husband and father. 589 592 562 ● [654]

Similarly with several old bachelors. A nephew moves in and works the farm, but the old fellow keeps strict control even to regulating the nephew's expenditures for amusements. In one case, where a widower had a small son, the son was taken in by a childless sister and raised by her, and when he grew up and married he inherited the sister's farm. His father remarried and raised a second brood. In another, two spinsters spent their lives on a farm worked by their two cousins. 589 592

The attitudes of the country people to these arrangements show that incomplete farm families are felt to be departures from the normal; they are subjects for commiseration. Such phrases as "It's a hard life she has with only the brother and no husband to help her" and "He's all by himself with only his son there on the land, poor fellow," are commonly applied to them. 589

The policy of the Land Commission in increasing farm holdings is very significant in this regard. The officials recognize the social value of the full family explicitly. According to the official in charge of land division in Clare, who has had successful experience in other regions as well: 654 594

An old-age pensioner without family could not be considered for an addition of land, nor could a couple of spinsters. . . .

134 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

592 with this china only under dire necessity. In many districts
352 the year's supply of home-cured bacon still hangs from the
353 rafters.

343 From the kitchen to the haggard, the farmyards, and cow
sheds is but a step through one of the half-doors. There
are found the sheds and outhouses where all the livestock,
agricultural implements, carts, are kept and the fuel supply
and the hayrick stand.

513 Sleeping arrangements reflect the age grading and the
sexual arrangements within the family. Children generally
561 occupy the "loft," a boarded attic covering from a quarter
562 to a half of the space under the peak of the roof. If space
is restricted, they may also occupy the "settlebed" in the
kitchen, or they may be divided up between the two on
the basis of sex. Older children and the married couple will
occupy the bedrooms.

353 The room, however, which we described as occupying
512 the part of the rectangle behind the hearth in the kitchen is
of especial interest. It may or may not be used as a bedroom.
It is generally so used only when space is limited. But in
this room all the objects of sentimental value (except the
shrine and the dresser in the kitchen) are always kept: the re-
ligious pictures, the ceremonial objects brought in by the
bride at marriage, and the bric-a-brac associated with the
past members of the household. Where there is only one
couple in the house, this room is reserved as a sort of parlor
into which none but distinguished visitors are admitted.

[523] The family heirlooms are there, and, lining the walls along
with religious pictures, there appear the photographs of the
members of the family, especially the familiar daguerreo-
types of the last century. Whatever "fine" pieces of furniture
[352] there may be, such as highboys, cabinets, brass candlesticks,
are kept there, as are all the religious objects used when mass
is celebrated in the house. All these objects are inalienable

[425] in the sense that the family parts with them only when it
[428] must. They descend from father to son with the house not
the farm on which it stands.

586 138 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

842 of the farm on the stipulation that his brother should marry. The brother thus got wife, dowry, and farm; and the identity of land and family was preserved for a new generation.

428 Time and time again that continuity of identification lies at the root of the behavior which follows upon the transference of control within a family.

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602 Particularly in the case of the incomplete farm families, a wide variety of arrangements appear to effect the same transition without going beyond the group. As the following generality explains, it is only the "crabbit" farmer who breaks through the circle of reciprocal obligation:

If there is no heir to hold the land, they [the childless couple] might give it to a friend, the nearest to the husband, or the wife might give it to the nearest to her. The husband might take a boy from his brother or, if he's crabbit, he will sell it and go to town and drink the money.

But the second contingency that the wife might give the land to one of her kindred may be a source of trouble. The great emphasis upon patriliney militates against it. As the countrymen say, they "want to keep the name on the house; they are dying to have the same name on the house."

582 At any rate some of the matches between cousins arise, consciously or not, because of this desire. And they occur
836 here and there in country districts, even though the full weight of the Church's authority is against them. Countrymen on occasion have explained that they are love-matches. By impregnating the girl, the boy forces the priest to allow the marriage "for cause." Soberer opinion, nevertheless, condemns such action. It is no light thing to "destroy a girl's character."

592 There are many more subtle ways of effecting the same end. Nieces and nephews, even grandchildren, may be
● 562 brought into the house, and matches made for them. In
428 this regard a conflict arises between legal right and social custom. The country districts recognize only vaguely the

FAMILY TRANSITION AT MARRIAGE

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right of a woman to hold property. The patrilineal identification of family and land is incompatible with it. Whatever farm a woman works or controls is regarded as a trust for a son or brother of her husband or father. 562 ● 428

The conflict is naturally never so phrased, nor is it ever debated. Yet there are many instances which show behavior, accepted fully as right and just by the local community, which reveal the patrilineal identification. A widow, for instance, remains upon the farm only if the children are beginning to grow up. If they are very young, she returns to her parents and a husband's brother may take the farm. Even if she marries, she and her new husband merely hold the land in trust. The new husband is, graphically, a "stranger to the land." 562 768 428 587

As a "stranger" he has no right to it. In a village in mid-Clare, to give an example, a "Yank" returned after many years in the United States to his father's farm, from which he and all his brothers had emigrated. His mother, now dead, had married again, and her two children by her second husband still worked the farm. D—, the "Yank," threw the husband out into the road, told him to go home, and took up the land. Later when he gave fortunes to both of the children, the village felt he had made ample amends for the stepfather's years of toil. 587 428

Whether or not there is a legally executed will, it is much the same. In Luogh, a son, inheriting a farm upon the death of his mother, allowed her old second husband to stay on with him. He was said to be "very kind to the old man." In Inagh again, though a small farmer, dying, willed the family's farm to his wife and children, a brother on a neighboring farm got most of the land. "He paid her nothing for it. He took bits of it here and there until it was all gone." Whatever protest there is must come from the growing nephews. Inagh makes none.

In matchmaking, too, legal form may be subordinated to 770

CHAPTER XI

Familism and Sex

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834 THE small farmers' treatment of sex and the relations of men and women is no less characteristic of their communities than is their treatment of age differences. The country people are the ones among whom marriage is latest in Ireland, bachelorhood and spinsterhood most common, fecundity greatest. They are the ones among whom there is an excess of males over females, a fact which gives all Ireland a sex ratio (973 females to every 1,000 males) unexampled among the long-settled Old World countries and comparable only to those of the new countries. Yet the best evidence gives them a comparatively low illegitimacy rate, too, and the country people yield to no one in the strictness of their sexual morality.

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834 In the small farm households of the countryside, the roles, privileges, and duties of male and female are complementary. The division of labor between the sexes is only part of separation of human activity into male and female spheres. By oriental standards, perhaps, physical segregation of the sexes may be lacking. Yet in the countryside the community sets very rigid norms of conduct regulating the relations between men and women.

Indeed, the bounds of propriety among the small farmers are quite well marked. An outsider can come to see something of them almost at once. Men and women are much more often to be seen in the company of members of their

FAMILISM AND SEX

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own sex than otherwise, except in the house itself. Except upon ceremonial occasions in family life or in the considerable affluence of owning a gig or a trap or a motorcar, in Clare at least they go to mass, to town, or to sportive gatherings with companions of their own sex. Till recently and even now in remote districts, a conventional peasant woman always kept several paces behind her man, even if they were walking somewhere together.

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The women do not go out on *cuaird* like the men. Their sphere of interest and influence is better confined within the family circle. Women do not take part directly in the deliberations of such cliques as that described in the old men's house at Rynamona. On the other hand, they are not in the least excluded or treated lightly or in a derogatory fashion. At the old men's *cuaird* the woman of the house is nearly always present. Her being of the company does not seem to stem the flow of talk in the slightest. She remains silent or is ignored so long as their talk deals with the world of the men's interest. But when the talk swings around to her sphere, she is consulted and is ready to take an active part.

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The girls, of course, the unmarried younger women and adolescents, keep to themselves and form cliques and smaller groups of neighbors and kinswomen among themselves. Occasionally a dance breaks the ordinary succession of work and evening talk in the kitchen. And then, in their more restricted place, they are ready to go about under the tutelage of parent or brother to meet the young men and boys of the community.

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All this is nothing new and has been described before. Yet one must review it, because in it one can see the existence of statuses of the kind we have demonstrated before. Old woman, married young woman, and girl, each term is a status in the countryside, in the same manner as in the cases of the boys and men we have already presented. The

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204 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

562 terms are summaries of status in farm economy, family life,
561 and the cliques of the community.

834 Consequently the comment and attitude of the small farm-
208 ers toward sexual behavior cannot be divorced from their
appreciation of status in family and community. For them
sexual behavior is merely one aspect, not of individual
personality, but of sociological role. If one turns to any
record of the sort of commentary and discussion the small
farmers carry on among themselves, both in the semi-public
discussion of the *cuaire* and in the more private talk of
conversation among friends of a common age and status,
one encounters a characteristic set of remarks and evalua-
tions. These are for the most part discussions of specific
persons in specific events. The attitudes expressed are
directed now toward persons, now toward general condi-
tions, now toward moral or ethical imperatives, now toward
cosmological principle. Yet always, if sex is the subject, the
status of the actors and the interests of the familist farm
economy are the themes.

562 Women are valued and praised for their fecundity. All
842 this is part of generally accepted convention among the small
farmers, and such conversations as the following are not in
the least unusual, despite the very great modesty and reti-
cence of the farmers. A small farmer is praising an old
woman, the head of the household, to one of the authors and
contrasting her to her son's wife, both being listeners:

Here is a woman that has no more milk of her own. They
shouldn't allow a woman like that to breed because a man
should always keep his wife in the milk. The old woman, God
bless her, raised every child with the didi [breast].

369 The country-bred boy and girl grow up in an atmosphere
831 of constant reference to sex and breeding. There seems to
be little of the ignorance about such matters which the
townsman delights so in attributing to country people. In
Ireland, no less than elsewhere in the world, the antagonism
between town and country often expresses itself in such

FAMILISM AND SEX

213

Even in cases of illegitimacy, if the mother comes to marry another man than her child's father, a match may sometimes save the day. It serves the social purposes and repairs the damage, though it removes none of the stain upon one's local reputation. In spite of the strictness of country standards, many small farmers have married "poor, unfortunate girls" of this kind, without irreparable loss of respectability. Yet even then the attitude of the community fits the familistic norm. Such cases are felt to be very unusual and special departures from custom. They are matters for some surprise and congratulation.

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The moral standards of the countryside involve a most strict control of the young people in sexual matters. Premarital virginity is the ideal. It is a double standard, of course. The young lads are not, or were not until recently, expected to be so pure as the girls.

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The sexual urges of the older people are deemed adequately satisfied in marriage. Adultery very seldom seems to come into the reckoning of the small farmers. This is part of the equation of sexual appetite and familistic aspirations. The country people know something of town prostitutes and have heard of occasional marital lapses in the countryside as well. But these matters are not of great interest. The incidents, as far as one can judge, are of infrequent occurrence. Marital fidelity is not only the ideal; it seems to be the fact as well. It seems even to be taken for granted, and any other course felt inconceivable.

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Thus we must look to the relations among the unmarried young couples to see the chief point of pressure in the rural system of values. That is the area in which there is nearly all the smoke and not a little fire.

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Although premarital virginity and complete abstinence from any kind of sexual activity is the ideal for the young, local custom emphasizes marriage all the while. Local dances and other festivities are the chief times of meeting

298 · FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

443 conventional. How much, if anything, survives of medieval commerce in them and how much comes down from the days of the medieval Irish *aonach* is a matter for the historian. In ancient times the fair was a gathering for purposes much more widely embracing than exchange of produce. The *aonach* was often the occasion of a royal or chieftainly court, a bardic contest, and local games. Nothing of this remains today.

443 Cattle, horse, sheep, and pig fairs are fixed, habitual occasions. Their dates and places of meeting are universal
424 knowledge in the countryside. An extension of medieval English law has made most of them proprietary, making of the right to hold a fair a legal title to be bought and sold and charged for in the shape of tolls. But they are public occasions none the less.

443 The lore of fairs is an inexhaustible fund of information among the small farmers. Among them, indeed, the size of the local fairs is a matter of local pride. It is an index of the industry and wealth of the region. The state of prices is as much a clue to the fate of the local universe as the financial vagaries of Wall Street or the City reveal the destinies of the world.

443 All this is natural enough where fairs and local markets represent the chief outlets for produce and the chief source
462 of monetary income. As cattle are the chief concern of the
562 males of the family and source of ultimate success or failure for the family, so the cattle fair is the great testing ground for male prowess, skill, and intelligence. In the market place of the cattle fair, the male command of the family corporation and masculine representation of that corporation in the community makes public display of its stewardship. On this stage, the farmer can meet the outsider on his own terms and with his own weapons of shrewdness and experience.

437 The farmers criticize bitterly any departure from cus-
443 tomary procedure. Even though they complain that the fair

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204

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777 the hens from laying more; this is held at least near Tulla and Sixmilebridge, but seems dying out near the former place.

XIII. *Omens, Dreams, and Divination.*

787 *Omens.*—It is an unlucky sign to meet "a stranger woman with red hair," or a hare, or a fox, when setting out in the morning. A poem by Andrew MacCurtin, as already noted,⁴ condoles with Father MacDonnell, a Franciscan living in Corcomroe, for the loss of his horse, and suggests that the *garran* fell a victim to the evil eye or to the look of a red-haired woman. A sign much feared in north-east Clare is the flying of a bat into one's face, which forebodes sickness. A robin, a stray cat, or a cricket coming into a house is lucky, but some regard the last as a sign of death,—though this belief is rare and perhaps imported, for in Dublin "the ever-faithful cricket" is also a death omen. If the right ear tingles some one is praising you, and if the left someone is abusing you. If the right hand itches you will lose money, and if the left you will receive it, providing you rub or scratch it on wood. Any one of these omens from itching is good after sunset, and rubbing the right hand on wood saves the situation or the money in either case. To get dirt on one is most lucky,—"the dirtier the better." To stumble upstairs, and to be looked at by a cat after it has washed its face, are signs of approaching marriage.

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Dreams.—It is most unlucky to dream of church or clergy, and, above all, of the sacraments. To dream of a cat foretells an enemy; of a dog, a friend; of crows or filth, riches and plenty; of silver, disappointment; and of dirty or stormy water, trouble. Cheap dream books have corrupted local belief so much that it is now almost impossible to separate the older dream lore.

Divination.—I have not found many methods of foretelling the future, but the following were of such common knowledge that I need cite no single authorities. On All Hallows Eve, I remember, before 1870, a blindfolded person would touch one of several saucers in which were respectively earth, water, salt, a bean, etc., symbolising death, emigration, luck, marriage, etc., in

⁴Vol. xxi., p. 196.

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332

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A FOLKLORE SURVEY OF COUNTY CLARE (continued from
p. 213.)

XVI. *Patterns and Religious Fêtes.*

796 THE three chief *patterns*, (or religious rites at wells and holy places), were held on Iniscatha or Scatterry Island in the Shannon, at Killone near Ennis, and on Iniscaltra in Lough Derg. To all three thousands of persons came from Clare, Kerry, and more distant counties, until by degrees dissipation crept in and the clergy suppressed the festivals, leaving only a purely devotional shadow.

The Scatterry pattern was held at the beginning of March, and celebrated St. Senan's victory over the "Cata" monster.¹ Its best record is a stone, which I last saw and sketched in 1875 in a garden at Naboclith Lodge in Kilkee, to which it had been brought from Kilrush by the late Capt. Kennedy. It had been brought over from the island to Kilrush when the pattern was suppressed by Dean Kenny,—some say in 1810 and others "before 1827," though the pattern was still celebrated in 1816. John Windele some sixty years ago thus copied it:—

"In the name of God, Amen | Bare head, bare feet, all pious Christians are to kneel | At every station say or read, five Paters, Aves and a Creed | Five times round each blessed place | singing hymns and partner (?pater) beads. | Round the altar is a first | And two noted stations on the strand annex (?are next). | Round the Island on the water's edge: | Fourth, the Nun's² tomb on the strand du (*sic*) west. | Whoever kneels and read (*sic*) a prayer will not meet a watery grave. | Bringing up a stone to Monument Hill³ perform there and that's the fifth. | Sixth, N. East a place called Laoth⁴ and at our Lady's church women stop. | Eighth, the large church. Ninth is the S⁵ (? Saviour's). Tenth is the bed call:—l St. Synan's grave.⁶ | The well is eleventh finish and pray for ye souls of ye erectors of this blessed place."

¹ Cf. vol. xxi., p. 477.

² St. Cannara, buried on the strand as the saint would not permit her to land on the island.

³ Knocknanangel to the south of the cathedral.

⁴ Lacht.

⁵ No woman dared approach, and still less enter, St. Senan's church, the most northern of the group. For a description and plan see *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxvii., pp. 276-89. "S. F." says, (*The Dublin University Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 347), that no woman dares to approach the Lady's Well.

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333

The names Thomas, James, and Patt. Cusack, and carvings of the round tower, Crucifixion, an angel, and a figure with a chalice, also appeared, as well as St. Senan with a crozier driving out a beast with a serrated back, belly, and tail, and the inscription "St. Synon and the Angel casting the amphibious beast out of the blessed Island." I could not find the stone after 1878. The devotees in 1816 took their rounds about the holy well annually on their bare knees, and it was the practice of those who could not conveniently attend to hire for a small payment some poor person to act as their substitute. The pattern was sometimes held on Easter Monday, and, as it was degenerating into drunkenness, the Roman Catholic Dean of Killaloe endeavoured to stop it.⁶ His curate also persuaded several women to enter St. Senan's church, but their families were soon after evicted and left the Island, so that the fame of the saint's legendary misogyny was established more firmly than ever. But in 1878, when I first visited the Island, women entered the church without protest.

At Killone the great patterns have been long since suppressed,⁷ and I could learn nothing about the actual rites. "Rounds" are still performed at other times, being frequently vowed in sickness or for a sick relative. The rite consists in going on the bare knees, with bare head, sunwise round the green tongue of land from the altar between the crags and the lake. This being done, prayers are offered at the altar itself. Some pilgrims also wash their heads, feet, and hands in the bathing tank. The details vary according to the vow, and count is kept of the rounds and prayers by the rounded stones on the altar.⁸ None of the observances seem to extend to the neighbouring abbey. The Pilgrim's Road is still visible, running north from the well far towards Ennis. The altar was last repaired by Anthony Roche, an Ennis merchant, in 1731.

The patterns on Iniscaltra, in Lough Derg, have long been nearly forgotten. In 1877 an old boatman told me that he had heard from old people of the flotillas of boats from every side of the great lake, the villages of tents, and the crowds of beggars,

⁶ Mason's *Parochial Survey*, vol. ii., p. 459, under Kilrush parish.

⁷ The summer pattern on St. John's Day still attracts a fair number of devotees, but seems to have no very exceptional feature.

⁸ Cf. *ante*, p. 50, and Plate III.

561 complain about how difficult their new work regime is when compared to the
461 old. Young men are chided by their elders, as well as by their wives, about how
178 much less they labor today than did their forerunners and womenfolk. One of the
561 most popular conversational themes among old men is the contrast between
[521] generations—how much stronger and more industrious those of the “hero breed”
(a term favored by Mullen [1936] in describing Irish islanders of the past) living
• [562] half a century ago were than men are nowadays. Women are provoked by how
vociferously their spouses complain of the difficulty and endlessness of their labor,
and yet how little initiative and industry they exhibit and how often they are
idle. “Light work” or no work at all is customary on days when the steamer calls,
when it rains heavily, on the day an islander dies and two days afterward, on Sun-
days and holydays of obligation, and at other times, contrary to the state of affairs
which prevailed in the past.

461 Several men admitted to me their guilt about not working more often and
energetically, and told me that many of their fellows “talk big” but do not match
their words with deeds. All of them questioned the need for maintaining tradi-
tional patterns of labor in light of the many supports to the economy provided by
the government. One candid islander suggested that a factory be constructed in
Inis Beag which would employ all of the men two to four hours each morning—
“Then people would have a steady income and a lot of time off. Now it is hard
to get up in the morning and decide what to do, and by noon you are just reach-
ing a decision.” An even franker man, of the oldest generation, was unwilling to
agree with his peers about how hard they had worked when young. He was willing
to acknowledge that now “times are easier,” but that when he was a youth men
often were idle and were chided by their elders and felt guilty. Interestingly, he
was aware of the phenomenon of primitivism, which he described as “the romantic
notions writers have about us.”

Land Ownership

311 Inis Beag comprises a townland of four 256-acre quarters, called “carrows.”
423 Other land units are the half-quarter, the “cartton” of 64 acres, the half-cartton,
[131] the fourth or “crogger” of 16 acres, the half-crogger, the acre, and the three-
[807] quarter, half-, and quarter-acre. I have mentioned already that the total acreage of
the island is 1440, the strand and common land together make up 200 acres, and
the initial division of land among the local inhabitants probably was accomplished
[657] by a landlord late in the seventeenth century. Approximately 1000 acres are owned
[427] by the Irish Land Commission today and rented to 57 landholders, while two other
properties have been purchased from the commission and thus are owned privately.
The acreage not accounted for represents shore areas which are useless for agri-
cultural and grazing purposes. Rent is charged according to the fourth and is 5
shillings¹ per year at the present time.

The quarters of Inis Beag extend southward in roughly parallel fashion
from the four villages, and each landholder possesses numerous fields, ranging in

[436] ¹ A shilling is the equivalent of 14 cents and a pound \$2.80 in United States currency.

VILLAGE DIFFERENCES • 53

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829 passersby, and live more frugally and save more as a result. Gruff, impatient, and often impolite, they talk rapidly in high pitched voices and shout at their beasts

[213] and at one another from a distance, and on occasion they will use profanity. Inis Thiar men drink more than Inis Beag men, it is claimed; rather than sipping slowly and savoring their stout and whiskey, they consume it quickly and are more concerned with the effects that it produces. It is admitted in Inis Beag that all Irish are inquisitive and disposed to gossip about their fellows, but islanders to the west are openly so and will "demand" information from tourists and will [993] discuss one another quite freely. Braver, "bolder," and less concerned with morality, men from Inis Thiar rowed to the freighter on several occasions and contested successfully with local folk for salvage, which caused some Inis Beag wives to

- [502] deride their husbands for not possessing these qualities. Women of Inis Thiar also are thought to be braver and bolder, and remain less in their homes, visit relatives and acquaintances and the shops more often, and in general participate more in social events than do their sisters to the east. Despite being extremely critical of Inis Thiar folk for possessing the above and many other less prominent traits, the people of Inis Beag grudgingly admit that their neighbors possess greater *esprit de corps* and enjoy life more than themselves. Once a person emigrates from Inis Beag, he or she seldom returns; but Inis Thiar emigrants are "clever" and do well abroad, and often return with earnings to remain at home, especially women who come back with "fortunes" to seek husbands.

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186 The attitudes of islanders toward those living on the mainland—"towns-
[121] people" or "city folk"—reveal a primitivistic bias which probably can be traced back to the Viking occupation, when towns first were established in Ireland and primitive Celts became transformed into peasants: "that primitive people retain a morality which civilized people tend to lose; that a man's moral worth declines in rough proportion to his distance from the soil; that civilization must be held accountable for man's noteworthy catalogue of vices;" (Ardrey 1961:147-148). Inis Beag folk regard themselves as impeccably moral and mainlanders, although fellow Catholics, as immoral; yet the "progressiveness" of the latter is envied secretly and gives rise to the sensitivity of islanders to the real and imagined denigration of them by mainlanders for their backwardness. Mainland Irish are

- [291] thought to be overly pecuniary, dishonest, rude, and promiscuous. When visiting towns and cities on the mainland, Inis Beag people for many years have worn mainland attire so as not to be singled out and ridiculed. They are ashamed of their English speech—even though adults speak the tongue with greater proficiency than many urban dwellers—and believe that they are prey to dishonest shopkeepers, who are ever ready to take advantage of their ignorance and naiveté. Whenever [123] my wife and I paid short visits to a nearby port or to Dublin, we were requested by islanders to make purchases, have repairs made under our name, and transact other business for them because we were "too clever to be cheated." Once in the city, the folk miss Inis Beag with its clear air and broad expanses, and they complain of the tall buildings (seldom more than four stories high) which "press in" on them, the bustle of the main street, the curious stares of townspeople, and the dirtiness of buildings and roads. In claiming that few islanders would prefer to live there

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE • 69

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581 able degree, has been dominated by parents who have allowed him to take on few
582 major responsibilities, has a mother who acts as a wife surrogate in all but the
[154] sexual sphere (at least consciously), has established a routinized existence, and has
[513] male companions for whom he feels affection and with whom he shares numerous
work and recreational activities. Some men who have been promised or willed land,
581 and who have consenting parents and brides-to-be, will balk at a match because
155 they are "too happy with the lads," and, if persuaded to marry, they will attempt to
retain as much of their bachelor role as possible within marriage—"The men run
[581] with the boys before marriage and carry on the same afterward." Several bachelors
and spinsters almost have married several times in succession, only to find the
sexual commitment on each occasion too difficult to make at the last moment.

581 Before the coming of a permanent priest to Inis Beag, it is asserted that
584 young people contemplating marriage were able to "keep company" frequently
173 and openly before the union was arranged, and that some pairings were "love
584 matches." But since then—with the separation of the sexes from late infancy on,
[208] the ubiquity of gossip and opprobrium, and the actions of priests—courting almost
has disappeared, and it is not uncommon for a couple awaiting their wedding to
have little personal knowledge of one another. Contact on the island between the
sexes today is limited to meetings at the few parties which take place, at the
occasional summer dances, or *céili*, held on a large flagging near the school, and
[175] sometimes "at the well" or "walking to the cow" during daylight hours. Two
generations ago, private Sunday afternoon strolls afforded young men and women
the opportunity of coming to know one another well, but these "rambles" about
the island are done now only by couples of the same sex—one of the several mani-
[581] festations of institutionalized friendship. Choice once again seems to be intruding
into matchmaking, however, with the increasing demands of acculturated youths
for marriage with "love."

581 Matches are the end product either of secret bargaining between the
584 families involved which can extend for weeks, or of the impetuous act of a man
who—goaded by companions or by stout, or both—will visit the home of his
584 "chosen" after dark to negotiate, accompanied by a kinsman or close friend. The
584 bargain, once made, is sealed by the male participants with the emptying of a
bottle of whiskey brought by the prospective groom, after which a boy or young
man of the household is sent out—often after midnight—to summon relatives and
acquaintances for a night long party, known as the *cleambnas* (the word for
matchmaking in Gaelic). Sometimes this party is followed by as many as three
more on consecutive nights, the expense for which is borne by the family of the
bride-to-be. When the bargaining is protracted, it usually is done during the 12
days of Christmas or the final fortnight of Lent, and the match is announced soon
[521] after Epiphany or Easter. Hearsay concerning possible matches abounds at these
times, but each year "most rumors are dry," unless, of course, "with a lot of drink-
585 ing and urging a man might decide to take the plunge." It was customary in the
[829] past for the wedding to take place four days after the *cleambnas*, but now the
[582] service must wait from one to three weeks until the genealogies of the families of
[593] the bride and groom are examined by the parish priest to determine their degree
of consanguinity.

72 • THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY

Implicit in these statistics are such Irish phenomena as monogamy, the pre-
dominance of the nuclear family (Only 10.3 percent are extended in Inis Beag.),
family exogamy, patrilocal residence, and a high incidence of celibacy. The last
listed bachelor who lives with his widowed sister-in-law, and frequently is visited
by a brother's adolescent grandson from the mainland, is regarded by many bache-
lors as fortunate—"He has a woman and a boy to work and no 'responsibilities.' "

Inheritance in the island is patrilineal, and before a man can marry, his
father or widowed mother must "pass on" the property to him. To encourage aged
men to surrender ownership of their land, a statute forbids their receiving the old
age at 70 years until they have so acted. But despite this law, six Inis Beag elders
aged 70 to 79 years—with a total of seven bachelor sons ranging in age from 32 to
47 years (not counting eight others who have emigrated but are eligible to inherit)
—still maintain ownership themselves. When a man is without sons, he most com-
monly wills the land to a brother's son or arranges to have a man wed his daughter
and "marry in" to the household. An in-marrying son-in-law, it is interesting to note,
may pay a bride wealth, which usually is much larger than the dowry of the girl,
for he has no land of his own. Among contemporary landholders, five have obtained
property from uncles, six from widowed mothers, and two by marrying in. Other
land in Inis Beag has been procured through purchase, exchange, gift-giving, and
land dispute verdicts.

A major cause of celibacy, late marriage, disputes, and emigration related
to the system of inheritance, seldom mentioned either in writings about Inis Beag
or by the islanders, is the common practice of a father playing off his sons against
one another for the patrimony in order to achieve favored treatment for his wife
and himself in their waning years. Elders are well treated, in part as a result of the
above and in part out of the fear that after death their ghosts will punish those
who have maltreated them. Often the playing off of sons for the patrimony leads to
factionalism within the family and may provoke a secretly favored son to emigrate
or, more seriously, all sons acting in concert to depart in anger and disgust. Today,
a total of 22 married men, widowers, and widows whose average age is 65.7, hold
land that is inheritable by a total of 56 sons whose average age is 30.1 years. (The
16 elders who have a total of 20 sons in the island average 66.7 years of age and
their offspring 33.6.) The uncertainty about which sibling will inherit is reflected
in these figures: of the 59 present landholders, 47 percent are first born, 42 percent
second, 8 percent third, and 3 percent fourth and beyond.

Although the Inis Beag family is totally exogamous, the village is only
78.3 percent exogamous (The range for the four villages is from 75 to 83 percent.).
Since 1911, six women have married men, mostly farmers, living in communities
along the neighboring coast and only one an Inis Thiar islander, while four main-
land and five Inis Thiar women have wed men from Inis Beag. During this same
50 year period, six local men have married into contiguous mainland settlements
and one into Inis Thiar, but no men from the outside have married into the
island. As we have noted already, immigrants for two or three generations are
regarded as strangers by the folk, and the same is true of in-marrying wives; these
women are treated aloofly and are the victims of much spiteful gossip. Many
female siblings marry locally rather than emigrate—one case of four sisters, five of

76 • THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY

(Humphreys 1965:245). A far more forceful statement is that of Marvin K. Opler and Jerome L. Singer, wherein they address the etiology and consequences of the Oedipus configuration in the Irish family:

The central figure in Irish families is more likely to be a controlling figure on the distaff side, while fathers, especially in straitened economic circumstances, are frequently by contrast shadowy and evanescent. . . . An Irish male . . . beset with anxiety and fear of female figures early in life, and lacking possibilities of firm male identification with a father, would later experience the sexual repressions and socio-religious definitions of marriage and sexuality for which his culture, with its high celibacy rates, protracted engagements, and sin-guilt emphasis, is justly famous. . . . all this spells a final anxious and fearful lack of positive sexual identification, varying in a continuum from repressed and latent homosexual balances through to added displacements and distortions that are either pallid asexuality or fearful and bizarre misidentifications. . . . Irish resistance to role identification . . . was seen as . . . having the imprint of anxiety in relations with persons of the opposite sex, ordinarily mothers and older sisters. . . . [The] . . . basic personality has stamped into it such feelings as male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females, and the kind of latent homosexual feelings which produce a further sense of sin and guilt. . . . (Opler and Singer 1956:15-18).

Complementing the Oedipus complex is male solidarity, which has a long history in Ireland—revealed in legend, historical sources, and modern literature. Psychologists of Freudian bent see male solidarity as one of the many behavioral manifestations of the Oedipus configuration—based on "male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females," and "latent homosexual feelings;" but many anthropologists (especially functionalists) analyze it as a sociocultural phenomenon, for it is found in societies where the Oedipus complex appears not to exist. Elizabeth Coxhead, in discussing Lady Gregory's play, *Grania* (completed in 1912), alludes to the "tragic plight" of many Irish women, past and present:

Grania is . . . a play in which a woman is ousted from an emotional relationship between two men. The "love" is that of man for map, of brother for brother; it is loyalty to the warrior band, and a corresponding resentment of the woman who takes away the warrior's freedom, makes trouble with his comrades, distracts him from his purpose in life. It is an attitude which filters through the play as light filters through crystal: which runs through the heroic legend again. . . . Its continuing validity was borne out by all Lady Gregory had observed in the world around her, the world of the "loveless Irishman," the peasant society which relegated women to serfdom, the middle-class intellectual society which left them only donkey-work. . . . it is not Finn alone who robs *Grania* of Diarmuid. "His desire was all the time with you yourself, and Almhuin." Almhuin, the charmed circle of hunters and warriors; its modern equivalent was the masculine society of clubs and bars, of wit and talk and stimulus, from which a woman . . . would be forever excluded. . . . such a view of the Irishwoman's role, of her relegation to insignificance and her resentment under it, is not exclusively feminine. It is abundantly confirmed by Synge. His heroines . . . are creatures caged and raging, given no scope for their powers, condemned to love men who are poor things beside them and do not really care for them at all. . . . A woman has only to put her nose into a saloon bar . . . to realize that Almhuin is with us still (Coxhead 1961:145-146).

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Marriage figures prominently as a provision of economic welfare in folk societies throughout the world, and this is illustrated in Inis Beag by two statements made to me by middle-aged, married men: one said that marriage is a matter of "making a good living," and the other that the attributes of an ideal wife are, "She keeps the fire going, has the tea ready, and listens to a man's troubles." Performing economic tasks, satisfying sexual needs, and rearing children are the *raison d'être* for women according to most island men, but this does not mean that affection between spouses is lacking. The relationship between most mates, however, is one of "accommodation," and the affection, if present, lacks depth. It is said that "husbands and wives never walk together;" but my wife and I have observed two couples who often fail to observe this dictum, between whom conjugal love as defined in the Western tradition appears to exist. Intimate communication between mates is rare, as it is between most folk—including even mothers and sons and those who are allied through institutionalized friendship.

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Several disputing husbands and wives have not spoken to one another, except formally, for many years. In the case of disputes of this sort—as well as those involving other kin in the household—the parties involved limit as much as possible both contact and cooperation between themselves rather than resort to abusive argument. Physical assault is unusual, but that the repressed wish to perpetrate violence may be widespread is attested by the delirious response of the islanders to the plot of John M. Synge's play, *The Playboy of the Western World*, when related to them; in it peasants of Co. Mayo laud the youthful "playboy, Christy" for apparently "slaying his da" (father) with a "loy" (spade). The act which so horrified viewers of nativistic persuasion in Dublin and Boston half a century ago arouses the opposite effect among the folk.

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Women commonly express jealousy of and resentment against not only what they consider the less time consuming and stressful work load of men, but also the greater freedom enjoyed by their husbands. Many times women confided to my wife that they are greatly distressed at being forced to remain home minding their children and performing tedious household chores, while their spouses range the entire island and the sea about it in their economic pursuits and are involved

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in numerous social activities forbidden by custom to women. Some of these same women expressed deep concern over being compelled by the unauthorized decree of local curates, as well as by the sexual demands of their mates, to produce as many offspring as possible; they complained that the constant bearing and rearing of children increase their work, restrict their freedom, and perpetuate the poverty of their families. Few men whom we questioned were aware—or were willing to admit—that such sentiments are held by their wives, but most men cited as one of the more attractive aspects of local life their being bossed by no one and being able to shift from one job to another among a wide variety to avoid boredom. Men are away from their homes much of the time, day and night, and they do far more "social" walking about the island, visiting relatives and acquaintances, and going to Inis Thiar and the mainland than do their spouses. Also, they frequent the pubs and attend the summer *céilí* on the common land, which married women do not.

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78 • THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY

Despite sexual repression and the complaints of wives about large families, children are much desired by parents, and the fertility rate in Inis Beag is extremely high. An examination of 109 marriages between 1891 and 1960 reveals that the average number of offspring per couple is 6.4 (7.2 for marriages in which the wife has passed the menopause); this figure excludes spouses who are barren. The range in family size is between 1 and 16 offspring, and 18 of the 109 marriages have produced 7 children—the modal unit. Today, 6 couples are childless and as a result are "pitied" by their neighbors, who hold that it is the females who are sterile. At least 2 women, to my wife's knowledge, have been examined by obstetricians on the mainland and been found fecund; but they have been unable to persuade their spouses of the medical fact or get them to consult the doctors themselves. Men are anxious about their own maleness, as evidenced in the ability to produce offspring in this case, and have an eye to aid in their labors and to descent, succession, and inheritance. Women desire children, in part, to compensate for the lack of attention and affection from their mates.

Most of the enculturation during infancy and childhood in Inis Beag is done by mothers, as men are away much of the time and, if at home, "don't like to mind the kids." Mothers favor their sons, whom they "overprotect" and to whom they give "seductive" care. In the process of childrearing, sexual interest is first elicited and then blocked by punishing its behavioral manifestations. As a result of the mother's close ties to the male child, the father often is alienated from familial interaction, is hostile toward the youth, and fails to become a source of firm masculine attachment. Disliking to fulfill the responsibilities of enculturation and often in conflict with both his wife and male offspring, the father forces his mate to project herself into her role as childrearer to gain solace, and thus the cycle repeats itself. Although fathers tend to favor their daughters, their desire to "escape" the home discourages a pronounced Electra complex from arising. The bond between mother and son is so binding that it is not infrequent for marriage to be postponed after the death of the father, and the son to work the holding for his widowed mother until he has reached the age of confirmed bachelorhood. "This is also the basis for the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law that is quite intense in Ireland, the prospect of which leads so many sons to refuse to bring another woman in on my mother" (Humphreys 1965:246).

Within marriage, husbands tend to relate themselves to their wives as they have to their mothers when single. The wife is the "strong" person in the household, on whom the husband is emotionally dependent even when their relationship is one of mutual withdrawal and uncooperativeness. In most households, the wife shares at least equally in decision-making, and in many the husband bows to his spouse's decisions, not only in minor matters but in affairs of utmost importance to the family and those relating to activities normally within the male sphere, such as farming. It is the wife who invariably handles the money in the household. Freudians would see the influence of the mother image in the realm of sex: the rarity of conjugal love, the lack of sexual foreplay marked by little or no concern with the female breast, the brevity of the coital act and the frequent spurning of the woman following it, the need to degrade the female in the sexual act, and the

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belief that the "good" women does not enjoy sex and, conversely, that the sexually responsive woman is by virtue of the fact "evil."³

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As might be expected, there is much sibling rivalry in the island. Between brothers, the major factors responsible are competition for the affection of the mother and for the patrimony; the latter condition adds fuel to the fire of disputes between many sons and their fathers. Competition for the mother's affection is also an important cause of rivalry between brothers and sisters, particularly when the love of the mother for her sons leads her "to slave" for them and "to demand that her daughters do likewise." But the early separation of the sexes and inculcation of male solidarity contribute as well to this antagonism. In some families, affectional ties between children and their grandparents—both agnatic and uterine—are closer than other kinship bonds, with the exception of that between mothers and sons. The grandmother in the extended family plays a considerable role in childrearing, even when the relationship between herself and her daughter-in-law is strained, which is usual; and children often visit the home of their mother's parents, where they are treated indulgently.

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The displaced parents in the joint family draw into the background reluctantly and with considerable difficulty. Writing of the folk of Co. Clare, Arensberg and Kimball say:

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Where the transition goes smoothly, father and son continue to work the farm together, but more often as the father grows older he retires to his seat by the hearth. . . . The coming-in of the daughter-in-law is sometimes not so harmonious. Disputes arise. . . . In such cases, the mediations of the parish priest and public opinion generally patch up a compromise, but, as far as the authors have observed, the transition is a gradual and successful one. The young woman usually serves a sort of apprenticeship at the hands of the mother-in-law . . . and at least during the young woman's childbearing years the older one maintains her control (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:123-124).

The transition is far less smooth in the island; fathers work less with their sons and retire sooner to the hearth (and the bed); and the apprenticeship of the in-marrying woman seldom extends beyond the birth of her first child. Disputes between grandparents and parents in the extended family of Inis Beag appear to be more numerous than in Co. Clare.

Disputes

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Disputes between kin and non-kin in Irish communities have been studied seldom until very recently. In reading what writers and social scientists have written about peasant Ireland in general, and Inis Beag in particular, one often is led to the conclusion that disputes are rare or altogether lacking. Nativism and primitivism have caused many observers to present this distorted picture of social

³ I must stress the provisional nature of these data on sex, and those to follow on p. 110, for they are based on a limited sample of men and women respondents and relate to the cultural area of most circumspection.

82 • THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY

closely approximate those for Aughnaboy; only the severity classification in Inis Beag differs, with gossip most prevalent followed by withdrawal, argument, and interference.

A further step in Leyton's analysis is his examination of the severity of disputes and the issues provoking them with relation to the four categories of persons involved. Jealousy and personality clashes, in that order, are the causes of disputes between affinal kin in Aughnaboy, which give rise to withdrawal and argument. In the case of agnatic kin, the causes are personality clashes and economic conflict, and withdrawal and argument are the sole responses; the same causes apply to disputes between non-kin, but interference rather than withdrawal is by far the most conspicuous response. Disputes between uterine kin are negligible. These rank orders are in accord with those of Inis Beag except for the predominance of interference in disputes between non-kin; on the island, gossip and withdrawal outweigh interference. The major disputes in Inis Beag are: between spouses and between mothers and daughters-in-law among affinal kin; between fathers and sons, between brothers, and between brothers and sisters among agnatic kin; and between families, between shopkeepers, and between particular individuals who are distantly or not related. Since disputes between agnatic, uterine, and affinal kin have been discussed in the last two sections, I will consider here only disputes between non-kin.

At least eight family disputes are ongoing in Inis Beag today, one of which has roots in events of a century ago (Another is supported by the exhortations of a ghost, as we shall see in the next chapter.). All are the result of past and present contests over the ownership and inheritance of land, and of past personality clashes which have led to violent argument and interference, especially physical violence, and have come to involve near cognates of the original enemies—"a clash between two individuals soon becomes a clash between two groups of kin." This type of factionalism gives rise mostly to gossip and the avoidance of one another by members of the contending families; only on rare occasions, usually at large social gatherings after much drink has been taken by the men, will disputants engage in face-to-face argument, which soon can provoke fighting between two and sometimes more persons. Fights are short-lived, inasmuch as other islanders, the headmaster, or the priest intervene to redress "the delicate balance of power . . . between the separate groups of kin." Legal suits over land ownership and inheritance have been many during the past three decades, and on several occasions guards have been summoned to Inis Beag by feuding families to investigate cases of physical violence and the destruction of property. Theft as a form of interference is practically unknown on the island. Economic conflict and the clash of personalities also underlie the dispute between the two shopkeepers, and gossip and withdrawal characterize their relationship, just as that between members of disputing families.

Since most of the folk in Inis Beag are related at least distantly, the term non-kin denotes both "those I have a relationship with" and those who are unrelated. Leyton finds that most non-kin disputes in Aughnaboy involve at least one person who has no effective kin; this situation does not exist in the island where everyone has effective kin. By far the greatest number of disputes between non-kin in Inis Beag occur between members of the same sex and involve men rather than

578 women. They arise largely out of personality clashes and are expressed in gossip
[642] and withdrawal. As in Aughnaboy, none of the disputes between men appear to be based on competition for women, although jealousy of a rival and anger at being rejected have spurred a few disputes involving particular women and couples.

578 One of the important causes of personality conflict in the island is the dogmatism
626 of the folk. They are quick to form opinions, often on the basis of inadequate information, and cling tenaciously to them once they are voiced publicly. Thus, a simple difference of views concerning a topic between two persons can grow into [328] a serious altercation lasting a lifetime—and beyond. One facet of this dogmatism is the local belief that the character of a person can be assessed accurately on first [123] meeting him. I became the victim of a dispute of sorts by telling a man that my "first impressions" of a new acquaintance often are wrong, and that I prefer to interact for some time with the individual before passing judgment on him; this admittance branded me as deficient in character and one to be "withdrawn" from, and I never made it again.

[21] I have mentioned that dependence on the guided interview can prevent an
578 observer from gaining insight into disputes among Irish and Inis Beag peasants;
[81] this is so because dysfunctional social relations are kept carefully hidden from outsiders—the conscious models concerning disputes not only are incorporated into the self-image of the islanders but are urged on strangers. The concern for kin, acquaintances, and particular groups manifested in speech and behavior, which at times can be most sentimental, cannot be taken at face value. The emigrating relative whose departure provokes tears on the strand may be forgotten quickly, and his absence even heralded, in the privacy of the home, and the mourners at a graveside may include many who display indifference when thought to be unobserved while kneeling in the rear ranks. This state of affairs gives rise to a brief consideration of the problems associated with procuring reliable data.

114 Honor Tracy, in the first chapter (aptly entitled "Forebodings") of her book, *Mind You I've Said Nothing*, humorously predicts the various reactions that her volume will stimulate in Irish readers. She concludes with the following statement about the difficulties surrounding fact-finding in Ireland:

114 This question of fact was another of the spectres hovering in my path. In every
[81] book there should be a fact here and there or the writer is charged with aimless frivolity. But facts in Ireland are very peculiar things. They are rarely allowed to spoil the sweep and flow of conversation: the crabbing effect they have on good talk is eliminated almost entirely. I do not believe myself that the Irishman conveniently ignores their existence, as sometimes is said, so much as that he is blithely unaware of it. He soars above their uninviting surfaces on the wing of his fancy. Who then would answer my questions truthfully, who would supply me with that modicum of sober and accurate information required to give my book a serious air? No one, as far as I knew. And if facts are elusive and shadowy things in Ireland, opinions are more so. An Irishman... will say not what he thinks but what he believes you would like him to think; he is a man of honeyed words, anxious to flatter and soothe, cajole and caress... [He does not] reveal his own true thoughts if, to be sure, he has any. He would be in dread lest you quoted him and the story went around and he got the name of a bold outspoken fellow, which might be bad for business. And then again so many Irishmen find an innocent glee in misleading and deceiving for its own sake.

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The islanders know little of church dogma and the purport of rituals and feast days. What knowledge they do possess often is distorted, and they seldom read the Bible or manuals of instruction or engage in doctrinal discussions among themselves. I discovered by consulting priests and church histories, dictionaries, [122] and exegeses—both before and during my stay in Inis Beag—that I came to know [123] far more about the faith than any of the folk, and I sometimes imparted what I had learned to the curious in homes and even in the pubs. Instruction is welcomed by the islanders, but they dislike criticism from any quarter of their idiosyncratic Catholic observances, pagan retentions and reinterpretations, and non-Christian behavior. They also dislike being told, especially by returned emigrants, that "Catholic culture" in Ireland is quite unlike that in other parts of the world and arouses dismay and even incredulity in many foreign Catholics who visit Ireland.

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The paths to salvation, according to the islanders, are threefold: obeying the curate, performing the rituals of the church diligently and punctiliously, and conforming to the moral laws of Christianity. Being saved, however, is to them much more a matter of escaping Hell than of achieving Purgatory and eventually Heaven, and they experience more anxiety about failing to conform to the moral laws than pride in conforming to them. Furthermore, it is sins of thought rather than sins of deed which preoccupy them. While they boast of their morality as expressed in behavior, they labor under a heavy burden of guilt arising out of repressed sexual desires, jealousy and envy of their neighbors, and anti-clerical sentiment, among other attitudes. It is difficult for most of them to confess these to the priest, and thus their feelings of guilt and fear of damnation are compounded. Many times in Inis Beag I heard a "good Catholic" defined as one who "thinks mostly of death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell" and guides his conduct accordingly. Life on earth is regarded as merely a brief prelude to the "eternity stretching beyond the grave," to be lived only in preparation for the Day of Judgment and borne patiently in all its "pain and suffering." Priests and nuns are envied for many reasons, among them the fact that they can "spend most of their time preparing for death" and thus are in a better position to achieve salvation.

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It is apparent to outside observers and to the folk alike that women are more pious than men. They attend church more regularly, are more serious of mien at mass and during other religious observances, and are more prone to talk of religious matters than men. Many women go to mass daily, and it is said that all of the women of the island, but only ten men, have evaded going to Hell magically by attending mass nine Fridays in succession after Ash Wednesday (or, according to some, the first Friday in each month for nine successive months, or the first Friday after Ash Wednesday for nine years in succession). The reasons for this are several, but the most important are that women are less contented than men and thus have a greater need for the solace that religion affords, and they are more restricted socially than men and by fulfilling various church obligations can escape household confinement and interact with other women. Some islanders are thought to be overly pious—"wear their religion on their sleeves"—and are subjects of amusement and derision; those who use piety to cloak avarice

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characterized by storytelling, games of various sorts, contests of strength, taunting and mocking, mischief-making, and factional fighting (O Suilleabhain 1967: 26-129). It is hard to imagine a wake more somber than that which takes place in Inis Beag. Most of those who attend it do so before midnight and stay two to three hours, coming and going at will, while "only those who own him stay all night." Each visitor on arrival prays briefly at the bedside of the deceased or in the doorway of the room before expressing condolences, and at midnight all who are anywhere in the wake-house kneel and recite the responses of the Rosary intoned by the curate. Immediate kin express their grief in muffled sobs beside the corpse, but the ancient wailing lament for the dead, known as the "keen," no longer is heard in Inis Beag. Tables and benches are set up in the kitchen on which the men sit silently or converse in whispers with their neighbors, as they drink stout or whiskey and pass around clay pipes offered them "to keep the night awake." Most of the women congregate in the room of the dead, where only very old women smoke pipes. I have counted as many as 18 minutes of absolute silence at a wake and have never heard laughter.

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Before the procession to the church forms, men tend to gather in small groups outside the house of the deceased and women gather inside the house. After the corpse is placed in the coffin, close relatives and even friends shake the hand and kiss the face of the dead person before the top is nailed down; then the box is carried to the front street and placed across two chairs for prayers to be said and holy water sprinkled over it by the priest. A white sheet is draped on the casket, and six pallbearers shoulder it and carry it through a gap made in the stone fence to the road which leads to the chapel. The pallbearers are both agnatic and uterine kin of the deceased, excluding his sons, and two of them have the further duty of digging the shallow grave that night or in the morning before the body is interred. Moving slowly behind the coffin bearers, the procession is headed by the spouse and sons of the dead person, followed by his daughters, then women, and finally men in a long, slow moving, silent column; children other than the offspring of the deceased seldom join the procession, and the sexes walk separately.

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The curate may or may not lead this procession and the one the next morning, sometimes preferring to go ahead to church and cemetery by himself. A son of the dead person treats the grave diggers to stout in a pub before they set out with spades for the graveyard, as he does the pallbearers after they return from the church. In the past, the grave was dug as part of the funeral service, but this custom was altered as the cemetery became filled and occasionally diggers by accident broke into previously interred coffins revealing their contents. A number of grisly legends and anecdotes tell of islanders buried alive by mistake, or whose bodies were partially preserved, as revealed by such accidents.

The procession from the chapel to the graveyard leaves the modern road, as we saw in Chapter 1, to follow an ancient, obliterated trail past a church believed to have been buried beneath the sand centuries ago, and then climbs the long hill of kitchen midden and sand to the gate of the cemetery. Here the column breaks up, some people going to the graves of relatives to pray and others to the newly opened grave. Men and women kneel separately at the graveside for the service (see Fig. 11), and many of the women cry as the casket is lowered into the shallow

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ing souls of children and leaving in their place changelings, who gradually sicken and die. Since boys are favored over girls, Irish peasants of the region until recently dressed their male offspring in petticoats, sometimes up to the age of 18 years, to deceive the little people. Even now parents are loath to praise the health or beauty of their children for fear that the gentry will overhear and be prompted to victimize their souls.

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Solitary fairies are described by Yeats as "withered, old, and solitary, in every way unlike the sociable [trooping fairies]. . . . They dress with all unfairy homeliness, and are, indeed, most sluttish, slouching, peering, mischievous phan-

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tons" (Yeats ND :76). The long occupation of Inis Beag by leprechauns is evidenced by the Garden of the Cobbler and a spring at the back of the island, shaped like the sole of a shoe, which is known as Well of the Boot. Occasionally a leprechaun has been seen in the former location, but only the sound of a tapping hammer has been heard in the latter. Instead of guarding a buried pot of gold at the foot of a rainbow, as popularly conceived, the leprechaun of Inis Beag possesses a small purse in which he keeps but a single coin. Children sometimes are urged to hunt for the hidden purse, as a distraction by harassed parents. The rift valley between Castle and High Villages is thought to be the home of at least one "red man." He wears a pointed cap to denote cleverness and has a laugh, as distinctive as the hammering of the leprechaun, by which his presence is known. A practical joker with poltergeist qualities, the red man prefers to frequent houses, where his mischief is countered with bottles of holy water. From November of 1959 until June of 1963, my wife and I experienced, first in Inis Beag and then in our home in the United States, the antics of an unseen being who opened doors and windows, turned on lights and water faucets, and imbibed our Irish whiskey. Tongue-in-cheek, we placed the blame for these uncanny occurrences on an amiable solitary fairy who had attached himself to us, but eventually I felt compelled to report our unique contact with the Celtic supernatural to the anthropological community—a gesture regarded as "poison oak in the scientific groves of academe" (Messenger 1962:367-373).

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The spiritual omens of death are three in Inis Beag: the sound of trooping fairies building a coffin for the victim, soft tapping on the window pane of his bedroom, and the wailing of the banshee during the night before his demise. No one has ever viewed the banshee, but many have heard her cry out in the night, and the keen of Celtic derivation is said to be an imitation of her funeral call.

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She attaches herself only to certain families which inherit her patrilineally. An aged Inis Beag man was seriously ill with influenza on the night that my wife and I sponsored a dancing party, and a young man departing from it three hours after midnight played his accordion as he walked to his home located near that of the sick person. On learning of this event, the nurse shortly after dawn hurried to her patient to assure him that the wails he might have heard came from the instrument of the inexpert youth and not from the family banshee; at this news, thanatomania was prevented and the man lived another three weeks, when the banshee at last cried and was heard by those at his deathbed. Opinion is divided as to whether it is the fairies or the banshee who announce death by window tapping, but as a practical joke islanders long ago used to tap on the bedroom windows of those persons considered overly superstitious.

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108 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

boys and young men (attempts to hold their hands or kiss them, while under the influence of stout). Over a dozen efforts on the part of my wife and me to determine the truth behind the most pernicious rumors of this genre revealed sexual phantasy at their core in every case.

Church influence also is exerted through missions which come to Inis Beag every three to five years. On these momentous occasions, two Redemptorist priests (usually, but also Franciscans, Dominicans, and Passionists) spend a week in the island, where they conduct mass each morning and preach long sermons in the chapel every afternoon or early evening. Everyone—even old people and mothers with newborn infants—is urged to attend to receive the "blessings of the mission;" to some this means gaining time out of Purgatory for themselves or a deceased kinsman, while to others absence carries with it the penalty of damnation. A mission usually has a theme whose variations are explored with high emotion and eloquence by the visiting priests in their exhortations. The most common theme is "controlling one's passions," but abstaining from intoxicating drink and maintaining the faith as an emigrant also are addressed. Collections are made by children to support the endeavor, and a list of contributors and their donations is displayed publicly. It is said that a mission creates an emotionally charged atmosphere in the island which continues for weeks after the departure of the clerics.

The seeds of repression are planted early in infancy by parents through instruction supplemented by rewards and punishments, conscious imitation, and unconscious internalization. Although mothers bestow considerable attention and affection on their offspring, particularly on their sons, physical love as manifested in intimate fondling and kissing is rare in Inis Beag. Verbal affection comes to supplant contact affection by the time that the child can walk. Any forms of direct or indirect sexual expression—masturbation, mutual exploration of bodies, use of either standard or slang words relating to sex, and open urination and defecation—are punished severely by word and deed. Care is taken to cover the bodies of infants in the presence of their siblings and outsiders, and sex never is discussed before children of any age. Separation of the sexes starts within the family among siblings in early childhood, and is augmented by separation in almost all segments of adolescent and adult activity. Brothers come to associate mostly with brothers, and sisters with sisters, at play in and near the cottage, traveling to and from school, and in the chapel. Boys and girls are separated to some extent in classrooms and completely in play at recess. During church services, there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. Even on the strand during summer months, male tourists and vacationing emigrants tend to bathe at one end and women at the other; some swimmers change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses "daringly"—a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which bespeaks of sexual catharsis.

Parents and their school age offspring read the popular religious journals found in most homes, and many of the articles therein deal with sexual morality of the Irish Catholic variety. Several times my wife inadvertently inquired as to whether or not certain women were pregnant, using that word before children, only to be "hushed" or to have the conversations postponed until the young people could

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110 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

feel that sexual intercourse is debilitating, and they will desist from it the night before they are to perform tasks which will require the expenditure of great energy. Women are approached sexually neither during menstruation nor for at least six months after childbirth, for they are considered "dangerous" to the male at these times. Returned Yanks have been denounced from the pulpit for describing American sexual mores to local youths, and such "pornographic" magazines as *Time* and *Life*, mailed home by relatives from abroad, have aroused curates to spirited sermon and instruction. 833 [841] [846] [793]

Male masturbation seems to be common in Inis Beag (sometimes called the major "escape valve" for frustration in Ireland), but premarital coitus is unknown and marital copulation is limited as to foreplay and the manner of consummation. Elders proudly insist that premarital sexual activities of any sort do not occur in the island, but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on "petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the bolder of them kiss and handle outside of their clothing. Inis Beag girls, it is held by their lovers, do not confess these sins because they fail to experience pleasure from the contact; the male perpetrators also shun the confessional because of their fear of the curate. Absolute privacy at night is sought by married couples when they copulate, and foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the lower body of the woman, especially her buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated by the husband, and the wife is usually totally passive. Only the male superior position is employed, and intercourse takes place with underclothes not fully removed; orgasm for the man is achieved quickly, after which he falls asleep almost immediately. Whenever I talked with males of sexual practices other than those just described, my remarks were met with disbelief, or I was accused of "coddling" my listeners. 83 [833] [783] [824]

Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies, such as nudity and physiological evacuation, are considered sexual in Inis Beag. We have noted elsewhere the fear of nudity—which precludes washing the body and bathing in the sea—and the secrecy surrounding the acts of urination and defecation and the use of human manure as fertilizer and cow dung as fuel. The sexual symbolism of nudity not only has resulted in the drowning of seamen who might have saved themselves had they been able to swim, but in the death of men who were unwilling to face the nurse when ill, because it might mean baring their bodies to her, and thus were beyond help when finally treated. An island nurse confided to me that she was physically assaulted by the mother of a young man for diagnosing his illness in the mother's absence and bathing his chest as the woman entered his bedroom. Even the nudity of household pets can arouse anxiety, especially when they are sexually aroused during time of heat. In some cottages, dogs are whipped for licking their genitals and soon learn to indulge in this behavior outside when unobserved. 831 [758] [164] [824] 291 614

Hypochondria and depression in Inis Beag are inextricably linked, in that the former composes part of the syndrome of the latter; and just as sexual puritanism is undergirded by masochism, so are these two traits. Little more need be said about the causes of depression among the folk, other than to bring together factors which have been discussed earlier: the extent to which their lives are circumscribed by the will of the priest and other figures of authority; their poverty 15 [182] [181] [152] [562] •

RELIGION AND PERSONALITY • 111

181 and the never ending toil needed to maintain present subsistence standards; the
152 spying and malicious gossiping of their fellows and the ubiquity of jealousy and
• [562] envy; the isolation of the island, particularly during winter months; numbing
boredom and the dearth of social activities; for women, the lack of freedom and
of attention and affection from their spouses, as well as the necessity of enduring
828 sexual relations; and, as stated above, hypochondria. Much has been written about
829 isolation and its depressive effects on the islanders, and the folk themselves constantly
[104] complain of being shut off from the world and prey to wind, rain, fog, and
raging sea. But isolation need not lead inevitably to depression, for my wife and
I conducted research in another island of Ireland—far distant from and even more
inaccessible than Inis Beag—where the inhabitants do not feel isolated and are
not depressed.

121 I have expanded the clinical usage of the term hypochondria to include
fears of the spirit as well as fears of the body, for ill health can as often be induced
by supernatural forces, and death—whether by disease, injury, or aging—is the
164 ultimate fear with its threat of eternal damnation. Colds, influenza, dyspepsia,
migraine headaches, teeth decay, the crippling effects of joint and muscle ailments,
[115] hypermetrophy, and mental illness are paramount among health concerns. "Flu"
epidemics are frequent in the island and are a chief cause of death among people
[187] who have become weakened by old age. As the folk advance in years, they come to
spend more time in bed and by the turf fire and venture out less during the winter
[751] and when it rains. Drafts are avoided whenever possible, and clothes dampened by
seas which wash the canoes or by rain are changed for dry ones at the first opportunity.
Colds, flu, indigestion, and headaches more than any other afflictions send
[757] the islanders to the nurse for drugs and to their own folk remedies for relief.
[753] Dyspepsia is known as "wind" and is thought to result from diet, but the nurses
say that most cases of indigestion are the result of tension—"nervous stomach."
Nine cases of migraine were reported in Inis Beag during 1959, but many other
islanders, most of whom are women, suffer from "nervous headache" which can
[123] approach migraine in intensity of pain. Neither my wife nor I were ill during the
[757] winter of 1959 and 1960, even though we were abroad in all sorts of inclement
weather against the advice of our neighbors; when we began picking wild garlic
to season our food, it was reasoned that the condiment afforded us protection
against the flu, which reached almost epidemic proportions that year, and as a
result this folk medicine was used more widely and consistently than usual.

[114] Nativists and primitivists praise the health and hardiness of the folk and
boast of the absence of rheumatism and allied infirmities among them and the
sharpness of their sight. But, just as most adults past 30 years of age suffer from
decay and loss of teeth, they also suffer from muscle and joint ailments, caused by
the "damp and cold," and from far-sightedness. It is not known how many folk
wear glasses in the privacy of their homes, but only two persons, both men, wear
them publicly—and self-consciously when they do. Most glasses are not prescription
made but are purchased in mainland shops after many pairs displayed on the
counters have been tested, and often a single pair will serve the needs of all the
elders of a household. The islanders among themselves constantly complain of these
[829] and other ailments, although some will praise the health and hardiness of the local
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112 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

population in the presence of strangers, to conform to the nativistic and primitivistic stereotype. Probably the most robust of the two dozen islanders past the age of 70 years believes that he will live to be 100 years old, because he continues to be active physically and doesn't "worry about the health;" he accuses his fellows of "worrying themselves into the grave" over matters of body and soul.

The etiology of mental illness as conceived by the islanders is varied and embraces both natural and spiritual realms. "Insanity" stigmatizes the victim and his family, often for many generations, no matter what its cause, and as many psychotics are treated at home—hidden from the probing eyes of strangers—as are incarcerated in the mental institution serving the region of which Inis Beag is a part. Statistics on mental disorders are hard to come by because of the opprobrium attached to insanity, but at least eight of the folk were institutionalized for various periods between 1940 and 1965. Only one of these is a woman and none were violent prior to admission. Inheritance, inbreeding, and the menopause are the natural causes most widely accepted by the islanders, but some claim that heavy blows to the head, acute alcoholism, and even prolonged emotional tension—or "nerves"—can induce insanity. In explaining why a former Inis Beag curate was committed to a mental institution, an old man revealed what is probably the most significant cause of mental illness in Ireland when he said that the constant association of the priest with a pretty housekeeper "drove him mad from frustration;" he advocated that only elderly, plain-appearing women (who will not "gab" everything that they know to "our man") be hired for the task.

Supernatural forces are believed capable of causing not only mental illness, but most other maladies and injuries as well. Pagan dispensers of ill health are vengeful or capricious fairies, ghosts, and witches of the evil eye, while Catholicism provides an unpredictable Devil, a deity who punishes sinful thoughts and deeds in this world as well as in the next, and priests who in Inis Beag often have interpreted the boundaries of sin according to Irish and personal criteria. In the case of certain folk stricken with mental disorders, I have heard specific causes put forth to account for their condition: parents who are second cousins, the evil eye of a neighbor, punishment by God for a particular misdeed, and a priest's curse. A man who mistreated his aged bachelor uncle before his recent death now is haunted with the specter of being struck down from the grave with sickness, injury, or madness by the shade of the uncle seeking revenge. His despair and erratic behavior arouse little sympathy from his fellows, who await the day of reckoning. The stigma of mental illness arises from its designation as inheritable or a sign of the deity's displeasure, both of which may doom those of generations to come. There is a strong suspicion among the folk that other maladies which are deforming or leave physical aftereffects once cured can be transmitted through inheritance. In this category are two mongoloids, one dwarf, one epileptic, one person with goiter, one with a cleft palate, and one who has recovered from poliomyelitis. These disabilities also can stigmatize a family.

Probably the most infamous custom associated with the Irish is their excessive intake of intoxicating drink, and certainly Inis Beag islanders are no exception to the stereotype. Men drink far more than women, but even though the latter widely condemn the practice many are known to send their children to the pubs

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- 273 to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case)
 • [562] in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes
 273 place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to
 275 the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases
 [733] of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking
 [67] obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness
 and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness
 which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes
 them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse
 with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and
 273 "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-
 575 million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country
 125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they
 wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart.
 Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others
 a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and
 [561] boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects
 [626] of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

- 177
 178 As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not
 53 nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those
 found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are
 folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the
 crafts already considered only the knitting of ganzies, the crocheting of shawls,
 and *crios* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the
 538 evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose
 narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral literature.
 There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.
 114 "Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the
 171 oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this
 538 tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of
 178 orally preserved tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag
 124 folk share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the
 lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the
 time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional
 storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by
 538 plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two
 types of Irish storytellers: the *scéalaí*, who recounts myths and legends of the
 mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and
 the *seanchaí*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies,
 social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short
 realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1945:6).
 [562] In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

114 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

male but sometimes female. Also, the former occupied a higher prestige position than the latter, but there was not the clear-cut distinction between genres appropriate to each type of narrator as elsewhere in Ireland; the *seanchaí* sometimes related the exploits of Finn and the *scéalaí* the pranks of the red man. The two surviving storytellers in 1960 were both old men, but the *seanchaí* died in 1963 and the *scéalaí* two years later. Both had been prolific contributors to Irish Folklore Commission collectors and Continental folklorists.

All of the above kinds of folklore expression, with the exception of folktales, were regarded as true by island folk in the past. The myths either coexisted or were reinterpreted with Biblical stories, and the legends were synchronized with events of ancient world history dating from just before the Flood to the eighth century. The Inis Beag *scéalaí* sometimes was derided by school children for still believing his narratives to be true, as was the *seanchaí* for claiming that the supernatural happenings described in his tales actually were experienced by islanders in the past century. Both narrators for many years had been visited only by folklorists and tourists wishing to hear them relate their repertoires of stories, for the only form of storytelling which has been perpetuated is the occasional gathering of men in a home or pub to exchange anecdotes, mostly related to fishing. I was told that in his prime the *scéalaí* could have recited narratives nightly for "at least a month" without ever repeating a story, had he ever been called on to do so. That the memory of the esteemed narrator is prodigious is revealed in the complete collection of all the material recorded from a single *scéalaí* of Co. Kerry, reported by Delargy, which included 396 pages of text: 186 tales, a few songs and song fragments, and various smaller items of prose and verse. These had been obtained from 27 different sources by the narrator, all of whom save one were neighbors (Delargy 1945:11).

Most liked by the folk were the prose narratives related by the *scéalaí* and tales of recent and contemporary historical events in the region, stories of the supernatural in Inis Beag, and personal experiences told by the *seanchaí*. Few of the stories dealt with historical occurrences in Ireland between the coming of Christianity and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and none of them concerned personages or happenings associated with the church. At my request, the *seanchaí* read three books of Irish folklore that I had brought with me—J. J. Campbell's *Legends of Ireland*, Jeremiah Curtin's *Irish Folk-Tales*, and Eileen O'Faolain's *Irish Sagas and Folk-Tales*—and declared that he had heard all of the stories therein as a youth from his father and other island storytellers. However, the versions in the books often were "incorrect," he claimed, and he delighted in "correcting" them; of course, there are many variants of each tale (as many as 527—Aarne-Thompson type 300 in the archives of the Irish Folklore Commission), and he regarded the Inis Beag stories as the legitimate variants. Most of the local and Irish tales share types (plots) and motifs (incidents, characters, and objects) with those of European and other societies brought about by millennia of diffusion, but the Irish have refashioned these elements in their own corpus according to their culture and personality dispositions.

I will not discuss the various prose narratives told by the *scéalaí* of Inis Beag; the greater number of them can be obtained from Campbell or O'Faolain or Sean O'Sullivan's recent Folktales of Ireland.

538 or Sean O'Sullivan's recent *Folktales of Ireland*. But a further word must be said
539 of the tales recited by the *seanchaí*. Popular among local legends are those dealing
with such topics as the famine, evictions and other excesses of past landlords, visits
to the island by the Black and Tans seeking political refugees, shipwrecks, and
tragedies at sea among fishermen. Stories of the supernatural center around the
actions of fairies, the pookah and banshee, those with the evil eye, phantom ships,
mermaids and sea demons, and material objects possessing human attributes and
volitions. These local legends sometimes qualify as anecdotes, and it is humorous
538 anecdotes which the folk refer to as jokes. Outsiders—such as returned Yanks—
522 [177] are responsible for introducing true jokes, but often these are not told and soon
are forgotten, especially if they are "dirty jokes." There is no indigenous dirty
joking tradition because of sexual puritanism. I have heard men use various verbal
devices—innuendos, puns, and asides—that they believed bear sexual connotations;
[123] relatively speaking, they are pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a
[532] verse refers to an islander who arose late on the morning of the shipwreck after
"dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate;" this is regarded as a highly suggestive
phrase, and I have seen it redden cheeks and lower glances in a pub.

538 Storytelling in the past took place mostly between the last week of October
and early January, when inclement weather forced a slackening of the fishing
[221] regime, and the Christmas season kept people in and near their homes. Nowadays,
[178] card playing almost nightly during November and part of December by many of
[521] the men has become a substitute activity, which excludes the participation of
[561] women and children who once composed a part of the audience addressed by the
[542] storyteller. At any one time during this period, several groups met to hear Inis
538 Beag narrators; a *scéalaí* or *seanchaí* might be visited by a group and serve as host,
573 or he might be invited into or visit on his own another household, and word of
his presence would quickly draw an audience. The session lasted from eight or
nine o'clock until midnight, and a tale might be so long that its telling occupied an
entire evening, or even two or three consecutive nights. After completing a brief
narrative, the storyteller might call on a colleague in the audience to recite a sequel,
or the hearers might request that he continue or urge another to contribute a tale.

[857] The average sized audience was composed of a dozen persons, although
[562] as many as 20 might attend a session. Small children seldom were allowed in the
room unless they were members of the family of the host, nor were women of
another household; the children were admonished to sit quietly and not to talk or
whisper, and the women knitted or crocheted while listening. Seated in a semi-
circle around the hearth, the hearers were faced by the narrator who was seated
[574] on the right side of the fireplace, and the wife of the host on the left. Refreshments
never were served, but a clay pipe was passed around among the men and very
old women. The host furnished pipe and tobacco, and the pipe was passed back to
him by each person in turn after being puffed on for several minutes. Only if the
story was a long one was the pipe proffered by the host to the narrator from time
to time.

538 Most storytellers were men past the age of 60 years, but some were be-
561 tween 40 and 60 and a few even younger. An old narrator of reputation often
[868] called on a young man to recite in order to give him practice, if he felt that the

120 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

rejuvenate the moribund tradition. However, several men past the age of 40 years still are able to perform jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs with dexterity, "when the humor is on them," and are called out at parties and in the pubs; a few women will step dance in their homes or at small social gatherings. 535
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[1874]

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the rigid body and arms of the step dancer are an early nineteenth century product of Jansenist doctrine in the church, which attempted to desexualize dancing. Most of the movement is below the hips of the dancer, and it is the feet of the performer which are watched intently by the audience, at least openly. Inis Beag men move their upper bodies and arms more than is customary on the mainland, and they are not as graceful as other Irish dancers. 535
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Figure dancing is called "set" dancing in Ireland, and there are many such dances, each of which combines a number of simple and complex figures performed by the couples. There is only one set in Inis Beag; it bears no name and is danced by one or more groups of four couples each. The many figures of the dance are simple, and it takes about 20 minutes to complete. I have heard young dancers complain at the end of a night of the tediousness of the single set, and some of them are learning other Irish figures at language school dances—"The Walls of Limerick" and "The Bridge of Athlone," among others. The most enjoyed movement of the local set is the one at the end in which the man holds his partner closely and twirls her almost violently, sometimes for longer than is prescribed so that the musician must pause or alter his rhythm. With bodily contact between partners otherwise so limited, perhaps this figure allows the expression of repressed sexuality. [1874]

Parties

It is appropriate to describe the Inis Beag party and a festive night at the pub in this chapter, because they are esthetic as well as social events, in which are combined storytelling, music, song, and dance. Parties are very much the same, whether held in the winter or the summer or to welcome home a long departed emigrant or to "drag home" a new bride. Only two rooms of the house are utilized—the kitchen and "the room" adjoining it—and benches are placed along the walls to supplement the chairs and bed on which guests will sit. The barrel or two of stout to be served is placed in the back hall off the kitchen, if there is such a hall, or in a back corner of the kitchen, and one man is assigned the task of dispensing the drink and remaining at his post throughout the night. Another man acts as "pouurer" and fills a bucket from which he pours the stout into several mugs and glasses which are circulated from man to man. A bottle of whiskey is opened and proffered only to the old men, who often sit in a group beside the fireplace and exchange anecdotes and tales. On a table in "the room" are placed bottles of wine and soft drinks to accommodate the women and non-drinkers among the men before and after refreshments are served. Sometimes an elderly woman will drink surreptitiously of the whiskey or stout, and it is customary for the musicians and those who sing and step dance the most to be awarded extra amounts of stout. Women 574
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[1800]
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[562] •

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273 Women

• [562] tend to drink very little at parties, in part because of the embarrassment caused
[514] them by visiting the outside toilet with men looking on.

574 The party commences with several sets danced in quick succession. There
571 is room for only one dance group initially because of the small size of the kitchen
[535] and the large number of guests filling the house. It is difficult to move about the
[562] two rooms with the press of bodies, and the crowd within is matched by the
[857] cluster of men around the front door awaiting their turn to dance. Unmarried
women tend to sit and stand on one side of the kitchen and men on the other,
while married people congregate in the other room. Children in their best dress
sit quietly together and watch the festivities tirelessly until the guests depart.
574 Crowding at the party necessitates that men and women will be pressed together
834 both as dancers and viewers, and that persons will sit on one another's laps, includ-
ing women on the laps of men occasionally. The islanders strain to display indiffer-
ence, as they do in watching a full-bodied woman step dance, at least until the
intake of alcohol causes a few to betray their emotions.

574 Usually two or even three accordionists (and the visiting anthropologist
533 with his phonograph) are invited to attend, and they spell one another. After an
[123] hour or so of dancing, singers and step dancers perform between the sets while
574 stout is poured; they may be called out by the urging of the guests, or by the host or
273 one of his choosing who acts as a master of ceremonies and directs all of the
[533] activities of the party. Stout may be distributed during the sets, but most hosts
[535] prefer that it be done during pauses, so that less is spilled by the dancing and
milling crowd. The pourer with his bucket follows the movement of the mugs and
glasses as they are passed about, and each man on having his container filled drains
it quickly and surrenders it to another nearby. Most of the young men visit the
pubs before the party and may do so again once or twice before the pubs close.

574 Midway during the night, the table of "the room" is set, and refreshments
264 are served to all of the guests in shifts. First the women are served, then the chil-
[576] dren, followed by the young men who do not drink stout, and finally the other
men. Both in viewing the proceedings from benches and in eating, the children
are separated as to sex. The menu resembles that of the usual Inis Beag meal and
includes tea, bread spread with butter and jam, cakes, and sometimes hard candy.
[35L] Between the many sittings, the dishes and utensils are washed in a bucket and the
574 table reset. Dancing continues in the kitchen during this period, and after every-
535 one is served the table is moved to a corner and a second set is formed. The
remainder of the night is spent in dancing, but the pauses which punctuate the
sets become longer and the songs and step dances by guests more frequent as
dawn approaches.

574 My wife and I sponsored a Christmas party in 1959 in the home of an
579 islander and invited the entire population of Inis Beag. Two hours after midnight,
123 when I was absent briefly escorting an old man to his cottage, a fight broke out
[571] between two family factions which sent all of the guests scurrying home. The
following day, everyone whom we met commiserated with us "for the shame
of it," and we were told of many other parties in the past which had ended in the
574 same manner, so that we would not think our affair a failure. In recent years,
579 "rowdyism" on the part of youths who have "taken too much" has increased at
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[738]

122 • THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE ESTHETIC

parties, so that many islanders will not give them for fear of possible damage to houses and outbuildings. The reason why one man is assigned to the barrel of stout and a "firm" master of ceremonies is favored is to curb drunkenness and factional fighting. Small parties are coming to replace the large ones of the past, with invitations tendered secretly and at the last moment to avoid attracting "hooligans." The format, however, has remained the same.

Pubs

Both pubs in Inis Beag do a thriving business. There are some folk who purchase all of their provisions, drinks, and tobacco in only one of the pubs, others who buy most of them in one but occasionally do business in the second, and still others who scrupulously balance their buying between the two. The first group is composed of near kin of the publicans, and the second of those who are economically beholden to the king and utilize his pub mostly, or who dislike him and give the lion's share of their business to the other. This pattern is broken only when one of the pubs is out of a commodity which the other has in stock, one of them is closed for whatever reason, a "big night" is taking place at one of them, or a dispute interferes. During the day, provisions are purchased in the shop—by children, women, and sometimes men; the women and children make their visits as brief as possible, but the men are likely to stay for at least one "pint" of stout and a "smoke." Other visitors in the daytime are chronic drinkers, men who are working nearby and use the pub for a break, and men reciprocating for economic services rendered. The pub is the province of the adult males at night, and the only women who enter are the teachers, visiting emigrants, and tourists. Seldom is step dancing done unless outsiders are present, and when women are in the audience they will be called out to form a set or to dance solo or be paired with an islander. Some nights only two or three of the folk will put in an appearance at the pub, but on other nights as many as 20 persons will crowd into the narrow room, while others in the hallway and outside wait to take their turn inside. Another half-dozen men may sit in the snug drinking and talking together privately.

Men come to the pub after dark usually in groups of two, three, or four. Reciprocity dictates the drinking procedure, with each man in a group taking his turn at "standing a round" for as long as the evening lasts. Men who do not like to drink much or have little money will come to the pub singly or with another in like circumstances, so that they will not become victims of the custom of reciprocity. My first experience with this custom—in 1958 in a neighboring island—almost ended in tragedy for me, as I was with six men who insisted on drinking "glasses" of whiskey; only my deep commitment to research and a heavy meal a short time before prevented a "third round knockout." The first hour after the men arrive in the pub is a quiet one, as they sit in silence or whisper to one another while drinking pints in rapid succession. As their shyness gradually is overcome by alcohol, they become more talkative and speak in louder tones to a wider circle of their fellows. At least two hours must pass before individuals have "courage" enough to tell stories to all assembled or to sing. The best singers will be

16: Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

EMIGRATION • 127

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178 ble to visit Inis Beag frequently, as the cost and distance are slight compared to a journey across the Atlantic.

The many vacationing emigrants who now return to the island at Christmas or Easter or during the summer months often succeed in persuading relatives and acquaintances to return to England with them. Those so persuaded declare that they will return soon with their "fortunes" to settle permanently, but they seldom do once "emancipated." Since the Second World War, several Americans have returned home, and their stories of life in the United States make the youth restive. Tourists who remain for weeks and months in Inis Beag and come to know many islanders also sow the seeds of discontent. A favorite subject of talk in the pubs is the relative advantages to be gained from migrating to particular cities in England and America, and anthropologists as well as returned emigrants are called on as consultants in this matter by youths.

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207 Almost every cottage in Inis Beag has a radio, or "wireless," and although the folk seldom read books, a wide assortment of domestic and foreign magazines and newspapers find their way into most homes. These mass media also are an emancipating force making for restiveness and discontent, because they allow islanders a glimpse behind the "lace curtain" at what appears to be a happier and freer world. Television was introduced into Inis Beag in 1963 at the lighthouse, and a second set was procured for the new "dance hall" when it was completed two years later. Few islanders venture to the lighthouse to view television, but I am told by correspondents that many now visit the hall during the several evening hours when transmission from Telefís Éireann takes place. As a result, television has become an acculturative medium to be reckoned with. Both radio and television programs are censored in Ireland, but even so the morality expressed in them—especially in the sex and violence drenched American ones—presents a striking contrast to locally conceived moral precepts. A hypothetical censor from Inis Beag most certainly would create more discontinuities with his shears in television performances than would his much maligned "secularized" colleagues in Dublin. My wife and I found that viewing television with islanders at the lighthouse on two occasions was a traumatic experience; it gave us a different (and even more disquieting) perspective on programs in the United States and their enculturative effects than can be obtained at home.

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873 Since the Second World War, 28 island youths have pursued secondary education elsewhere in Ireland, either in high schools, called "colleges," or in technical schools, and most have been supported by government scholarships. The usual high school scholarship is for 5 years, and a student must be 14 years of age and qualify by competitive examination to receive one. Only 4 of these 28 students
873 —of which 2 are teachers in the national school—have returned to Inis Beag. One
• [862] young man watched 2 girls, either of whom he eventually might have married, go off to the mainland for school and said, "Scholarships are killing the island;" what he was referring to, other than his own disappointment, is the fact that 19 of the 28 students who left for advanced education are girls. The reason for the disproportionate number of girls receiving scholarships is that they are far more motivated academically and have better scholastic records than boys. There is, however,
[829] a widespread belief in the island that certain families are favored by priests and

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

human relationships are few. There is, in fact, little difference in the style of life between the most and the least prosperous of the islanders. The web of kinship rather than the possession of status attributes, for the most part, determines who will interact with whom and in what manner. Land and money are the principal symbols, with formal education and influential relatives (particularly priests, nuns, and teachers), on the mainland and abroad, becoming more important. Two generations ago, strength, courage, economic skills, and musical and storytelling abilities were highly regarded as well, but acculturation has lessened their significance.

Although there are fifty-nine nuclear families, only thirteen surnames exist today. There is much inbreeding, as might be expected, and the church carefully checks the genealogies of prospective spouses to ascertain their degree of consanguinity. Courtship is almost nonexistent, and most marriages are arranged with little concern for the desires of the young people involved. Late marriage and celibacy are as prevalent in Inis Beag as elsewhere in Ireland. The average marriage age for men is thirty-six and for women twenty-five, and 29 percent of those persons eligible for marriage are single.³ The functions of the family are mainly economic and reproductive, and conjugal love is extremely rare. A sharp dichotomy exists between the sexes; both before and after marriage men interact mostly with men and women with women. The average family has seven offspring, and many women are unhappy about being forced by the unauthorized decree of local priests to produce as many children as possible. They feel that the constant bearing and rearing of offspring increase their work, restrict their freedom, and perpetuate the poverty of their families. Jealousy of the greater freedom of men is commonly expressed by women who have many young children. Mothers bestow a considerable amount of attention and affection on their offspring, especially on their sons. However, tensions between fathers and sons which develop in childhood often flare into scarcely repressed hostility

³ Twenty-nine percent of those islanders of marriageable age are single. This rises to a high of 37 percent among first and second generation Inis Beag emigrants, indicating the actions of more than just economic causes. Irish scholars, for obvious reasons, tend to stress economic and other (climate, race, English oppression, the famine, loss of the Irish tongue, etc.) monistic causes in their analyses of culture and personality phenomena. Inadequate statistics for second and third generation migrants from Inis Beag suggest that the celibacy rate lowers markedly only when descendants of immigrants dissociate themselves from Irish ethnic communities and Irish-American priests. Ethnographic research is sorely needed among Irish of several generations in the countries to which they have migrated to probe this and other phenomena.

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

JOHN C. MESSENGER

593 later on, particularly in those families where competition for the inheri-
428 tance of property is engendered among siblings by the fathers' attempts
to ensure favored treatment in old age.

• 562 Men are far more active socially than are women. The latter are
574 restricted by custom mostly to visiting, attending parties during the
571 winter, and participating in church-associated activities. Many women
[484] leave their cottages only to attend mass, wakes, and funerals or to make
infrequent calls on relatives; my wife and I talked with some elderly
women who had not visited other villages or walked to the back of the
[275] island for thirty or more years. Men not only attend parties with their
[524] womenfolk but go to dances during the summer, frequent the pubs,
play cards almost nightly during November and December (the period
when once people congregated to hear storytellers), visit the homes of
kin and friends or meet along the trails at night, and range the entire
177 island and the sea about it in their economic pursuits. Before the age
462 of benevolent government, women shared many economic tasks with
men, such as collecting seaweed, baiting lines, and gutting fish. But now
they tend to household chores and only milk cows and perform some
of the lighter farming jobs with their fathers and husbands.

178 The island folk are devout Catholics, despite the fact that they are
771 critical of their priests and hold pagan religious beliefs. Youth of Inis
Beag overtly disallow the existence of other than church-approved super-
771 natural entities. However, their elders cling to traditional pagan beliefs
776 and practices (many of which are Druidic in origin) about which they
are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their
776 more skeptical neighbors. The non-Christian array of spiritual beings in-
cludes various spirits and demons, ghosts, witches, phantom ships, and
animals and material objects possessing human attributes and volitions.
Prominent among the spirits thought to inhabit Inis Beag are the trooping
and solitary fairies, sea creatures, mermaids, and the banshee. The most
formidable of the demons is a pooka which lives in a Bronze Age burial
mound and roams the strand and common land at night altering its shape
and size at will; during the day it will twist the limbs of unwary persons
775 who choose the hill for a resting place. Ghosts, called "shades," are
frequently seen after dark performing economic tasks. They are thought
to be doing penance in purgatory, which embraces the earth as well as
a spiritual locus; this is one example of the many reinterpretations of
754 Christian and pagan belief effected by the islanders. The only form of
witchcraft practiced today is the casting of the evil eye. At least three
persons, suitably ostracized, are believed to be able to perpetrate evil

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

JOHN C. MESSENGER

12 cultivate that "sharpness of ear . . . feeling for half-tones and shades and subtleties, and . . . wary alertness" which characterize ethnographic endeavor as an art as well as an epistemology.

181 The use by the folk of "wings of fancy," "honeyed words," and
195 "obfuscations"—popularly known as "blarney"—reflects a long tradition
[178] of verbal skill. It is a vital component of Irish and Inis Beag "charm,"
which often is a product of a delicately poised set of defense mechanisms;
beneath it can lie feelings of inferiority and dislike, envy, and jealousy
of others. Blarney can very effectively serve to shield genuine thoughts
[538] and feelings and thus protect the ego. Irish folklore and literature also
reflect this tradition of verbal skill, and it is probably expressed most
formidably in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. (At least one
folklorist has collected "Joycean utterances" from Irish peasants.)

123 Most of our information came from observation and unguided
interviews. It proved impossible to take field notes openly, except when
collecting innocuous data—such as the number of livestock owned by
each householder—from a few particular persons. Thus, we were forced
to limit our visits to less than two hours, after which we immediately
• [562] transcribed what our combined memories could resuscitate. Despite frequent
explanations of our presence in Inis Beag, which were candid and
truthful, it was thought by the islanders that I was interested only in
archeological sites and oral literature, and that my wife was not a trained
and experienced co-worker; this, obviously, reflects their previous experiences
with scientists and their conception of the position of women in society.
[609] Their inability to evaluate adequately our intentions proved
to be a research boon. For once "accepted" (a relative term, since no
outsider is ever accepted) after many months in the island, we were
allowed to listen to and participate in conversations and activities from
which we would otherwise have been excluded.

123 Our data on sex came from my involvement as a participant-
*831 observer in personal and often intimate conversations with men and my
wife's counseling of women who were bothered by such matters as explaining
and coping with menstruation, menopause, mental illness, the sexual curiosity
of their children, and "excessive" sexual demands of their spouses. Our sexual
knowledge and sympathy coupled with their needs and inquisitiveness gave rise
to a "counselor-client" relationship between many of the folk and ourselves. They came to speak freely,
albeit indirectly at times, with each of us about this sphere of behavior which
arouses so much anxiety and fear. I must mention that the relationship

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

to "our man") be chosen for the task. Earlier, according to island opinion, the same priest had caused to be committed to the "madhouse" a local man who publicly challenged certain of his actions. The unfortunate man was released six months later, as per law, since he was not mentally ill. 828

Sexual misconceptions are myriad in Inis Beag. The islanders share with most Western peoples the belief that men by nature are far more libidinous than women. The latter have been taught by some curates and in the home that sexual relations with their husbands are a "duty" which must be "endured," for to refuse coitus is a mortal sin. A frequently encountered assertion affixes the guilt for male sexual strivings on the enormous intake of potatoes of the Inis Beag male. (In Nigeria, among the people whom my wife and I studied, women are thought to be more sexually disposed than men and are the repositories of sexual knowledge; it is they who initiate coitus and so pose a threat to their spouses. Nigerian men place the blame on clitoridectomy performed just prior to marriage.) Asked to compare the sexual proclivities of Inis Beag men and women, one mother of nine said, "Men can wait a long time before wanting 'it,' but we can wait a lot longer." There is much evidence to indicate that the female orgasm is unknown—or at least doubted, or considered a deviant response. One middle-aged bachelor, who considers himself wise in the ways of the outside world and has a reputation for making love to willing tourists, described one girl's violent bodily reactions to his fondling and asked for an explanation; when told the "facts of life" of what obviously was an orgasm, he admitted not realizing that women also could achieve a climax, although he was aware that some of them apparently enjoyed kissing and being handled. 831* 833 [771] [864] [824] [171]

Inis Beag men feel that sexual intercourse is debilitating, a common belief in primitive and folk societies. They will desist from sex the night before they are to perform a job which will require the expenditure of great energy. Women are not approached sexually during menstruation or for months after childbirth, since they are considered "dangerous" to the male at these times. Returned "Yanks" have been denounced from the pulpit for describing American sexual practices to island youths, and such "pornographic" magazines as *Time* and *Life*, mailed by kin from abroad, have aroused curates to spirited sermon and instruction. 831* 834 [84] 831* 177 771 864 831* 562 • 834 [858] [864]

The separation of the sexes, started within the family, is augmented by separation in almost all segments of adolescent and adult activity. Boys and girls are separated to some extent in classrooms, and completely in

JOHN C. MESSENGER

*831
• 562 recess play and movement to and from school. During church services,
834 there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys
[858] and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. The
[864] pubs are frequented only by men or by women tourists and female
teachers who have spent several years on the mainland while training
and thus are "set apart" (and, of course, by inquisitive female ethnogra-
[443] phers). Women occasionally visit the shops to procure groceries, but it is
more common for them to send their children to do so, since supplies and
drinks are proffered across the same counter, and men are usually to be
found on the premises. Even on the strand during summer months, male
[484] tourists tend to bathe at one end and women at the other. Some swimmers
[526] "daringly" change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses—
[291] a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which has overtones of sexual
[832] catharsis.
[184]

154 It is often asserted that the major "escape valve" of sexual frustra-
[839] tion among single persons in Ireland is masturbation; frustration-aggres-
[272] sion theorists, however, would stress the ubiquity of drinking, alcoholism,
[733] disputes, and pugnacity as alternative outlets. Pugnacity can also be
[578] linked to the widespread problem of male identity. Our study revealed
that male masturbation in Inis Beag seems to be common, premarital
83 coitus unknown, and marital copulation limited as to foreplay and the
584 manner of consummation. My wife and I never witnessed courting—
"walking out"—in the island. Elders proudly insist that it does not occur,
832 but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on
"petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the "bolder" of them
kiss and fondle outside of their clothing. Island girls, it is held by their
[771] "lovers," do not confess these sins because they fail to experience
[626] pleasure from the contact. The male perpetrators also shun the con-
[783] fessional because of their fear of the priest.

833 We were unable to determine the frequency of marital coitus. A
considerable amount of evidence indicates that privacy in the act is
stressed and that foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the
lower body, especially the buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated
[291] by the husband. Only the male superior position is employed; intercourse
takes place with underclothes not removed; and orgasm, for the man, is
[12] achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep. (I
must stress the provisional nature of these data, for they are based on a
limited sample of respondents and relate to that area of sexual behavior
least freely discussed.)

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Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies,

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

JOHN C. MESSENGER

291

834 bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and
[759] sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)
[155]

It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health"
158 reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria.
751 In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with
[291] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear
[834] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism
[153] and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psy-
chosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"),
and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry
among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

514

827 Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evac-
[863] uation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and
[925] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that ha-
bitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.
• [562] Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at
[273] parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting
[241] the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most
carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works
describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand
as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered
that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed

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372

feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the main-
land, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and
burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach
plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is
burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another
514 custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the
283 secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are re-
[462] quired to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their
bare feet.

* 831 Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are
522 the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood
[154] by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows
little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various
verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore
[123] sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song
that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising
late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

identification, varying in a continuum from repressed and latent homo- 831*
sexual balances through to added displacements and distortions that are 15
either pallid asexuality or fearful and bizarre misidentifications. Since the [58]
culture does not condone sexual expression or postpones and then rigidly [838]
defines it in marriage . . . latent homosexual balances [were hypothesized]
for this group, no overtly sought interpersonal manifestations, and a facade
of asexual misogyny varied only by the most personalized and bizarre fe-
male identifications. . . . [The] basic personality has stamped into it such
feelings as male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility toward females,
and the kind of latent homosexual feelings which produce a further sense
of sin and guilt (Opler and Singer 1956: 15-18).

Among the seven diagnostic variables utilized by the researchers, the 831*
Irish patients ranked highest in the "Sin, Sex, and Guilt Ideology" (93 15
percent of the sample) and "Homosexuality Types" (90 percent of the 562 •
sample latent, none overt) categories.

Complementing the Oedipus complex in the etiology of sexual [671]
purtanism is male solidarity. It has a long history in Ireland—revealed [178]
in legend and modern literature alike—and is instrumental in delaying [582]
marriage and making for marital maladjustment. Freudian psychologists [581]
see it as one of the many possible by-products of the "universal" [182]
Oedipus complex—"male inadequacy, the masculine protest, hostility
toward females, and . . . latent homosexual feelings"; but many anthro-
pologists (especially structural-functionalists) analyze it as a socio-
cultural phenomenon, for it is found in societies in which the Oedipal
configuration appears not to exist. Elizabeth Coxhead, in discussing
Lady Gregory's play, *Grania*, alludes to the tragic plight of most Irish
women, past and present. 562
539

Grania is . . . a play in which a woman is ousted from an emotional re- 828
lationship between two men. The "love" is that of man for man, of brother 829
for brother; it is loyalty to the warrior band, and a corresponding resentment
of the woman who takes away the warrior's freedom, makes trouble with
his comrades, distracts him from his purpose in life. It is an attitude which
filters through the play as light filters through crystal; which runs through
the heroic Irish sagas. . . . Its continuing validity was borne out by all Lady
Gregory had observed in the world around her, the world of the "loveless
Irishman," the peasant society which relegated women to serfdom, the
middle-class intellectual society which left them only donkey-work. . . .
such a view of the Irishwoman's role, of her relegation to insignificance
and her resentment under it, is not exclusively feminine. It is abundantly
confirmed by Synge. His heroines . . . are creatures caged and raging, given
no scope for their powers, condemned to love men who are poor things

JOHN C. MESSENGER

- 562
539 beside them and do not really care for them at all. O'Casey's Juno offers
571 further positive support, and on the negative side, so to speak, are the
828 quantities of second-rate Irish plays and stories that have for their main-
829 spring a panic dislike of women, invariably represented as shrews, hussies,
and Aunt Sallies at whom anything can be thrown. A woman has only to
put her nose into a saloon bar . . . to realise that Almhuin is with us still
(Coxhead 1961: 145-146).

114 In concluding this section, I would like to mention briefly an in-
genious hypothesis of the cause of sexual repression in Ireland, presented
by Sean de Freine in *The Great Silence*. His book is the most "con-
vincing" expression to date of what linguists (outside of Ireland) term
"language determinism," a monism still popular in that country a century
after the advent of the Irish nativistic movement. Displaying a lack of
knowledge both of contemporary linguistic theory and of sexual ethics
in the "heart of the Gaeltacht," de Freine says:

- 182
177 The Irish are often accused of a Jansenist approach to sex, which is supposed
178 to date from the French influence in the Irish Church in and just after the
181 penal times. But this attitude did not exist in Irish Ireland and does not
*831 exist in the Gaeltacht today. It would seem as though, when English spread
195 throughout the country, it was English Puritanism and not French Jansenism,
179 which brought about the change. For example, certain English words with
prudish connotations were accepted, with their connotations, by the Irish,
while their equivalents in Irish have no such nuances. In its English setting
Puritanism was kept in reasonable check by the other native traditions: In
Ireland, as the old culture died, there were no such natural checks to con-
tain it (de Freine 1966: 164).

[20] Space does not permit me to consider other causal factors listed earlier
which are equally untenable.

SEXUAL REPRESSION: ITS INCULCATION

- *831 The inculcation of sexual puritanism in Inis Beag must be examined
181 in four contexts: the role of the curate, the influence of visiting missions,
182 enculturation in the home, and what I will term "secular social control"
626 —the behavioral regulations imposed on themselves by Inis Beag adoles-

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

govern our "morality, custom, and manners" (e.g., persuasion, ridicule, and gossip). I will not consider political and economic manipulation; more significant are other techniques that I have labelled secular social control. Inis Beag, as much as any human community, is characterized by gossip, ridicule, and opprobrium. Influenced by nativism, primitivism, and structural-functional theory, writers and social scientists have painted a distorted picture of culture and personality equilibrium among Irish peasants. Actually, the folk are neither glorified Celts nor "noble savages," and dysfunctional sociocultural forms, mental aberrations (neuroses, psychoses, and psychosomatic disorders), and exaggerated defense postures abound. [121] [626] [114] [181]

Inis Beag people are ambivalent about gossip; they welcome every opportunity to engage in it, yet detest the practice when they are its victims. When asked to cite the major deficiencies of their way of life, islanders usually place the prevalence of malicious gossiping near the top of their list. Boys and men hide themselves in the darkness or behind fences to overhear the conversations of passersby; they maintain close scrutiny of visitors during the summer, both day and night, in order to discover them in "compromising" situations. Parties are organized at the last moment and persons will leave the island without any previous announcement—often to emigrate or enter the hospital or join a religious order—in order to circumvent gossip. Rumors run rife in Inis Beag, especially when they concern, for example, the "nude" sun bathing of a visiting actress (bared shoulders and lower thighs) or the "attack" on a Dublin girl late at night by an island youth (an effort to hold her hand while under the influence of stout). Over a dozen efforts on our part to determine the truth behind the most pernicious rumors of this genre revealed sexual fantasy at their core in every case. [831*] [626] [609] [167] [574]

The force most responsible for limiting the potential social activities of women—which would make their lot much easier and possibly stem the tide of emigration—is the fear of gossip: "If I went for a walk, they'd wonder why I wasn't home tending my chores." Even couples who might otherwise disregard religious teachings and the wrath of the priest do not court, because it might be observed and reported through gossip to the entire population.⁷ An islander must carefully regulate his [831*] [626] [562] [167] [584]

⁷ The fear of being observed, as well as repression, may account for the apparent lack of sexual contact with animals. This practice may be common among mainland peasants, if one is willing to accept as evidence the existence of a genre of dirty jokes popular there, and hearsay among certain scholars concerning confessional materials. [839]